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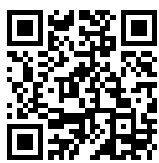

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TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED AT DOMINICA,

On the 11th and 13th of April, 1800;

AND OFFICIALLY NOTICED BY

HIS MAJESTY'S PRIVY COUNCIL IN THAT ISLAND.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

MINUTES OF THREE TRIALS WHICH OCCURRED AT ROSEAU IN THE SPRING OF THE PRECEDING YEAR;

TOGETHER WITH

REMARKS AND STRICTURES ON THE ISSUE OF THOSE TRIALS, AS WELL AS ON THE SLAVE TRADE, AND THE CONDITION OF SLAVES IN GENERAL IN OUR WEST-INDIAN COLONIES.

By the Rev. C. PETERS, A.M.

FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND LATE RECTOR OF ST. GEORGE'S AND ROSEAU, IN THE ISLAND OF DOMINICA.

- - - - - *Homo sum,*
Humani nihil à me alienum puto.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN HATCHARD, 190, PICCADILLY.

1802.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

NICHOLS *and* SON, *Printers,*
Red Lion Passage, Fleet-Street.

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PREFACE.

THE documents prefixed to the following discourses sufficiently explaining the cause of their publication, it is unnessary for the author to usher them into the world loaded with much preliminary matter; he esteems it, however, not improper to remark in this place, that, having suffered the present work to remain so long in manuscript (*a*), his judgment would certainly have led him to suppress it altogether, had his design in publishing extended solely to the hope of personal exculpation. What other end he has in view will appear with sufficient evidence, from a perusal of the papers which compose the Appendix to his Sermons; an Appendix (he must be allowed to add) the greater and most interesting part of which was written at a time when he had experienced, from the white inhabitants of Dominica, nothing but that liberality of conduct which so eminently distinguishes our West-Indian Colonists in general, and when (it is his entire belief) there was scarcely an individual proprietor of Negroes in the island, by whom he was regarded with sentiments of personal ill-will.

After this remark, all candid minds, he trusts, will be readily disposed to admit the truth of the following declaration: viz. That, with whatever severity the author has been led to animadvert, in various parts of the present work, upon the ordinary conduct and characteristic temper of West-Indian masters toward their slaves, such severity can in no instance be ascribed with justice to the suggestions of personal animosity, or to the influence of any other unchristian motive: so far is this from being actually the case, that a regard to truth, combined with what he knows of his own mental temper, allows and prompts him most solemnly to aver, that, had it been his fortune to number among the proprietors and managers of Negroes, in the island of Dominica, his very nearest relatives and dearest friends, no ties, either of affection or of blood, would have been sufficient to restrain him from publishing those facts and strictures, which compose the most offensive part of the ensuing work.

(*a*) The matter of which this Pamphlet is composed was ready for publication soon after the Author's arrival in England, in the Summer of 1800, and would certainly have been committed to the press before the expiration of that year, had it not been deemed advisable to wait for the return of more tranquil and propitious times.

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" *Dominica, Council-Chamber, April* 15, 1800.

" At a Meeting of his Majesty's Privy-Council.

" Present,

" His Honour JOHN MATSON, President, and Commander in Chief, &c. &c. &c.

" GEORGE METCALF,
" JOHN CORLET,
" BENJAMIN LUCAS,
} Hon. {
" ALEX. MACLACHLAN,
" ROBERT REID."

" The Commander in Chief stated to the Board, that " information had been communicated to him by sundry " respectable inhabitants in the Island, that two Sermons " had been preached on Good-Friday and Easter-Sunday " last, by the Rev. Mr. Peters, of a nature and tendency " the most alarming and dangerous, and such as to threaten " the subversion and destruction of the Colony. The Board " were informed also, that the publick mind had become " agitated; and that from the dangerous tendency such dis- " courses might have (if suffered to be continued) on the " minds of the Negroes and other parts of the inhabitants " of the Colony, great mischief was to be apprehended. " It is, therefore, unanimously resolved, that the Rev. Mr. " Peters be desired to attend this Board to-morrow morning " at 11 o'clock; and that he do at the same time lay before " the Board the two Sermons alluded to, for the inspection " and examination of the board. And it is further ordered, " that a copy of this minute, signed by the Clerk, be de- " livered to Mr. Peters by the Provost Marshal.

" (A true Copy.)

" GILBERT SALTON, *acting Clerk of the* " *Privy Council.*"

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ON the Author's return from the country in the evening of the 15th, he found this official paper at his house in Roseau: in consequeoce of which, he addressed himself the next morning to the Hon. Members of his Majesty's Privy-Council at Dominica, assembled in the Council-Chamber, in a written speech, of which the following is an accurate copy (*b*).

" GENTLEMEN,

IN conformity with your desire, I now attend, with the two identical Discourses that were delivered by me in the course of the morning services of Good-Friday and Easter-day last, neither of which Discourses have I subsequently altered, by the addition or the erasure of a single expression. With your permission, Gentlemen, I will now proceed to read them to you (as far as I am able) with exactly the same emphasis with which they were severally preached. You will first, however, I hope, Gentlemen, allow me briefly to express my present sentiments upon this interesting subject.

After the receipt of the official paper yesterday transmitted to me, and after the intelligence which has been communicated to me by different persons, who entertain, I am assured, toward me the most friendly sentiments, it is impossible for me to harbour a doubt respecting the agitation of the publick mind, in consequence of the delivery of the Discourses above referred to. It is indeed, I trust, almost needless for me formally to disclaim (as I now in the most solemn manner do) all intention of disturbing the peace, or endangering the safety of this Colony.

If, Gentlemen, (and most happy do I esteem myself in having the point decided by the judgment of persons so competent to understand, and so little disposed to pervert my meaning, as are the members of this Hon. Board); if, Gentlemen I say, in either of these discourses, you find a single sentence that evinces in the Author a design to subvert the principles of Colonial subordination; be it considered as the sentence of my condemnation to the most

(*b*) Of this address (which was hastily drawn up on the 16th, from the mere suggestion of the moment, and without any suspicion whatever at the time of its being destined to become the subject of publick criticism,) there was a copy taken by the same Member of the Privy-Council, who transcribed the Sermons.

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severe of human punishments; such should I unquestionably merit, and the penalty which (from man) I deserve, I have not humility enough to deprecate. Had, Gentlemen, any of my acquaintance but informed me, during the space which intervened between the preaching of my first and of my second Sermon, of the dangerous tendency of inculcating such doctrine in the audience of such a congregation, I should certainly have been dissuaded from resuming the consideration of the same subject on the ensuing Sabbath.

One of my friends, indeed, (a gentleman to whom I am now enabled to return my personal thanks on that account), did actually tell me, that my Discourse on Friday had been misunderstood; but when he gave me this information, I never in the least suspected that he alluded, even indirectly, to that which I subsequently found had been the grand occasion of offence; I thought he alluded to the impression which had been made on the minds, not of the *lower*, but of the *higher* classes of this community. If it seem strange, Gentlemen, that the author of a Sermon should be himself wholly insensible to those dangers which (in the opinion of every other person) resulted immediately and necessarily from its delivery; I can only say in my excuse, that I acted, probably, under the influence of the same principle which leads men, when playing at the game of Drafts or Chess, frequently to overlook those dangers which are manifest to every observer; and that entirely in consequence of being too intent on the accomplishment of what they deem an important and advantageous object. That the several precepts which, Gentlemen, you will hear inculcated in each of these Sermons are immediately deducible, and fully demonstrable from the spirit and from the letter of the Gospel, I must profess myself, before God, as thoroughly persuaded, as I am persuaded of that Gospel's divine original, and *that*, after the most strict and impartial inquiry, I no more question than the reality of my own being.

With these sentiments and persuasions, in what manner was it natural for me to act, but strenuously to impress upon men's minds (especially at those seasons when I expected to be heard by a numerous audience of all descriptions) the importance of those duties which I, from my heart, esteem equally essential to men's temporal and eternal interests in all situations, equally conducive to the welfare of the servant and of the master? And till, Gentlemen, that system which you will find uniformly recommended in the papers that I am about to read, be generally adopted, (and more generally adopted, I rejoice to find, it is annually

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ally becoming) no Colony, permit me to observe, will ever be in a state of actual security.

I shall mention, Gentlemen, but one thing more.

It is my deliberate and final determination to desist henceforth, not only from preaching in this Colony on the same or similar subjects, but from ever preaching in it more. A renunciation of my Colonial stipend after the present day, (at least after the 17th of the ensuing month, when my half-year's salary will become due) is of course implied in this avowal. I am prevented only by circumstances, which I may very shortly be enabled to explain to some of this Hon. Board, from relinquishing my present Colonial establishment *in toto*; I will not, however, fail to do so, almost immediately on my return to England, whither I purpose speedily to repair.

I should impose, however, a painful restraint upon my feelings, were I not, previously to my resignation of the appointment which I now hold, to express my most grateful acknowledgments to him, in the first place (*c*), to whom I was originally indebted for that appointment, and to those other branches of the Legislature (particularly, very particularly to those Members of it whom I have now the honour to address), by whose liberality the emoluments of my Colonial establishment were so much augmented."

Having finished this address, the Author was proceeding to read his Sermons; when the President of the Board (with his characteristick politeness, and in conformity with the sentiments of every other Member,) expressed a disinclination to give him that trouble: leaving, therefore, (in compliance solely with his own wishes), his two discourses on the table, to be officially examined and transcribed, he obtained permission to retire.

The paragraphs which follow, are extracted from two Dominica Newspapers.

"Mrs. BROWNE's Roseau Gazette, and Dominica Chronicle.
"*Thursday, April* 17, 1800.

"NOT one Emigrant above ten years of age was re-
"maining in that Island (Jamaica); and all its ports are

(*c*) His Excellency the Hon. Andrew Cochrane Johnstone.

 "strictly

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" strictly closed against their future admission. No doubt, " the utmost vigilance will be used to exclude such ungrate- " ful and dangerous wretches from every British Colony, " in which, it is a melancholy truth, there have appeared " *Priests* (*d*) of our own communion, enthusiastically de- " voted to the propagation of political dogmas, not only in- " consistent with their spiritual functions, but most dan- " gerous to publick safety."

" The Dominica Journal, or, Weekly Intelligencer.

" *Saturday, April* 26, 1800.

" OF the number of persons who visit Europe by this " convoy, is the Rev. Mr. Charles Peters, late Rector of " the Parish Church of St. George, but who lately, very " prudently, gave in his resignation, in order to avoid the " disgrace, which his conduct had so justly incurred, of " being displaced by the Legislature. We shall not (for " obvious reasons) touch upon the points in his doctrine " which gave offence: it is, however, to be hoped the " higher powers will forward a relation of the conduct of " this self-sufficient reformer, which will reach the source " of his ordination; as it is highly proper that this diminu- " tive wolf in sheep's clothing should exchange his gown " for the party-coloured trappings of the French Republi- " cans."

SERMON I.

Colossians, Chap. iv. verse 1.

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven.

THE relation which subsists between masters and servants originates in a principle so intimately blended with the welfare, and indeed so essential to the very existence of civil society, that it requires but little depth of reasoning or research to trace it to its source; it is sufficient, therefore, for me to observe upon this head, that as long as some

(*d*) The term Priests (it is to be observed) is in this passage a most expressive one: no Protestant Clergyman *in full orders*, beside Mr. Peters, having resided in Dominica for the last six years.

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members of every political community shall continue to excel others in strength, in skill, in application, in economy, or in judgment, and as long as it shall be permitted to the individuals, thus excelling, to transmit the fruits of their honest and meritorious exertions to their lineal or collateral descendants, so long must it unavoidably happen, that one portion of mankind will abound with the comforts, and what we are wont to term the superfluities of life, while another (and that incomparably the major part) will possess scarcely any other property than such as they are in the habit of acquiring by their daily labours. These latter, therefore, having little or nothing of their own, must of necessity apply for aid to those who possess more abundant means, and who, in consideration of their daily services, are ready to supply their daily wants.

The basis, then, of the connexion between masters and servants being thus evidently established by nature, or (what is virtually the same) by the fundamental laws of civil society, it remains only for me to enforce some of the most important duties which natural and revealed religion has annexed to their respective stations.

Time, however, not permitting me to enlarge in the same discourse on the several obligations mutually incumbent on the master and on the servant; I have been induced at this season to select for my text a passage which refers solely to the duties of the former. The consideration which principally dissuaded me from inverting this plan, and addressing myself to the slave rather than to his owner, I shall not scruple to declare:—I indulged the pleasing (though I regret to say, not well-founded) (*e*) expectation of numbering among my audience on this day a much larger proportion of the affluent proprietors of slaves than I am here accustomed to address.

How far, indeed, the higher orders of this community can reconcile to their reason and to their consciences their usual non-attendance in this place at the seasons solemnly appropriated to the offices of divine worship, or how far they may be able to urge, in justification of such non-attendance, pleas more valid and satisfactory than those which were alleged by the absentees from the evangelick feast, I

(*e*) In the original discourse, the passage enclosed in a parenthesis stood thus, (and let me express the satisfaction which I feel in being able to say, not groundless.)

The author's expectation, however, with regard to the number of his *genteel auditors* not having been realized, he was compelled in this instance (but in this only) to express himself in terms essentially different from those of the manuscript before him.

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pretend not to decide; but the natural and inevitable effects of such *apparent* irreligion upon the minds of the lower classes of this community, it is impossible for me not seriously to regret; and the regret which on this account I feel, I esteem it my duty thus publickly to express.

After this remark, I shall proceed, without further preface, to the consideration of the passage which I have chosen for my text;—"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven." These words naturally divide themselves into two parts; the former of which contains the Apostle's injunction respecting the mode of conduct which masters are required to pursue toward their servants; and the latter annexes the strongest sanction to that injunction, by (tacitly) admonishing them of the fatal consequences which await their disobedience.

I shall observe with relation to the former of these heads, that the rule here laid down by St. Paul; "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal,"—is alike comprehensive and intelligible; in what justice and equity toward any portion of our fellow-creatures essentially consist, and what practical duties they authoritatively injoin, the smallest share of understanding is, in general, sufficient to inform men; I mean, when their will disposes them to follow whither their reason and their conscience lead. Since this, however, unhappily alike for the servant and the master, is not always found to be the case, I shall now proceed to enumerate, and to inculcate, some of the most important obligations to which the situation of the latter, in *this* quarter of the globe, invariably gives birth, and to the consideration of which, the words of my text particularly prompt. One of the first and most indispensable duties required of every Colonial proprietor or manager of slaves, is to adopt the most judicious and equitable regulations, for the purpose of providing them with the means of a comfortable subsistence.

In the means of a comfortable subsistence, let me be understood to include, in the first place, such a proportion of proper clothing and wholesome food as is calculated to preserve the labouring negroes in a state of health and strength, and as will enable them to satisfy the wants of their growing offspring. An allowance sufficient for these purposes is the least that can possibly be granted them, without the most palpable inhumanity and injustice; since, if less than this were generally given to the labouring classes of mankind, it is evident to reason, that they must gradually decrease

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decrease in number, and that the earth would shortly be depopulated.

To impress the weight of this obligation, however, the more forcibly upon your minds, I will repeat to you the following declaration of Holy Writ: "He that defraudeth the labourer of his hire, is a bloodshedder." Now, if such be the criminality of the master, who treats an hireling in this manner, how much greater must we esteem the guilt of him who acts the same part toward his slave: an hireling can be defrauded only of the recompence due to his past labours; and even the sum thus owing to him he may, either through the influence and exertions of friends, or the regular operation of the law, be enabled probably to recover. But if the slave be stinted by his avaricious and unfeeling owner in that supply of nutritious food, and other necessaries, which is essential to the well-being of himself and family (and which consequently we must needs consider as the least recompence that he is entitled to), to whom shall he apply for redress? I believe no impartial hearer will deny that his case, unless there be a very extraordinary combination of circumstances in his favour, is altogether desperate, his sufferings (in this world) without a remedy.

Here, however, I am aware of being likely to encounter with an objection, which, if allowed to pass unanswered, will effectually counteract the force of any argument or exhortation that I can urge upon the present topic. Are not, it will be said, the servants of European masters (particularly in Great Britain and Ireland) accustomed to experience, from hunger and from cold, sufferings equally severe and fatal with those of any West-Indian slaves? Why then, by implication, impute to some of the owners of the latter a crime with which no one ever thinks of charging the masters of the former? Respecting the merits of this objection, as far as its validity depends upon the truth or falsehood of the fact asserted, I shall be silent, and that on the following account, because it is, with relation to the inference intended to be drawn from it, a matter of absolute indifference, whether the assertion rest on solid or on unsubstantial grounds, since between the two cases there is not even the faintest shadow of similitude; to argue, therefore, from the one to the other is, of course, irrational. That there is no analogy whatever between them will be manifest to every one, capable of discriminating, who reflects on the peculiar circumstances combined with the state of society at home and here. To establish, however, and more fully to illustrate the position for which I now contend, I will suppose the following simple case: I will imagine an English master to have been in the habit

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habit of employing daily 100 servants, and that of these ten, in the course of one year, died entirely through want, I mean through hunger and through cold, and the various evils naturally consequent. I will suppose likewise, that they all died in the vicinity of their employer, and that this employer possessed, during the season of their distress, the power of affording them effectual relief. Yet must I contend, that we can by no means (even in this case) equitably ascribe either their miseries or their death to him, any more than to any other equally affluent person, residing at no greater distance from them, and equally acquainted with their circumstances. Whoever, indeed, could withhold from any portion of his fellow-creatures, known to be perishing through want, that relief which it was in his power to impart; whoever, himself partaking daily of a plenteous feast, could suffer a human being, with whose wretchedness he was fully acquainted, to expire near him, a victim to the cravings of hunger and of thirst; whoever, I say, is capable of acting such a part as this must be acknowledged to possess a soul congenial with his who rules in the regions of guilt and misery, and who, living in a state of perpetual enmity with God, must naturally have eradicated from his breast all sentiments of benevolence to man.

This, however, I must again insist on, that neither the sufferings nor the death of the unhappy beings above described can, with any semblance of justice, be imputed in an exclusive or even peculiar manner to the guilty conduct of the person by whom they were last employed. His only engagement with them was to allow them, as long as they remained in his service, a certain daily or weekly sum: this they could not reasonably consider as inadequate to their deserts, at least they could not on that account justly blame their employer; since, if they were dissatisfied with the wages which they received from him, they were at liberty to enter into a more lucrative engagement with some other; but to have their wants either anticipated or supplied by the person whom they last served, after a discontinuance of their services, was a condition of which they never even thought: when, therefore, they were reduced to a state of extreme indigence and misery, they had, certainly, no legal or even moral right to apply for relief exclusively to him. In England the benevolent wisdom of our forefathers has appointed, for the appropriate guardians and patrons of the poor, the laws and statutes of their country; and whoever, entrusted with the execution of those laws, *there* suffers, either through culpable inattention or more criminal design, the very lowest of his fellow-creatures to expire through want

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want of the necessaries of life, is justly to be esteemed obnoxious to the charge of murder; since in no district of the English realm, where the owners of landed property have any thing to spare, can any individual of their fellow-subjects be legally consigned to a state of destitution, or suffered to die of indigence. But though the duty of relieving the necessities of the labouring poor rarely devolve in England, in an exclusive manner, on their employers, the case is altogether different in this portion of the globe; between the Colonial slave and his proprietor, there subsists a relation of a far more intimate and lasting nature; one to which, with the single exception of the temporary situation of apprentices, there is in Great Britain no connexion whatever between the servant and the master that bears the least affinity. The slave is bound by the laws both of religion and of society, constantly to exert the faculties of his mind and of his body in the service of his owner, whose directions he is under a moral obligation to obey in all things not in their nature sinful: such is, unquestionably, the duty of every slave. But can any reflecting and dispassionate mind conceive, that there is no reciprocal obligation incumbent on his proprietor? Is there (permit me seriously to ask you), is there any social institution, I will not say *sanctioned*, but even *tolerated* by the divine law, which is not calculated, and by Providence designed, to promote the mutual interests of all the parties respectively concerned? For my own part, I do not hesitate to express an entire conviction, that a state of servitude (both voluntary and involuntary) would have been positively forbidden by the Supreme Lawgiver, had not that state been in its own nature alike conducive to the happiness of the employed and the employer *(f)*. How truly advantageous it is to the former as well as to the latter, mankind in general are not, perhaps, duly sensible.

(*f*) In order to obviate that misconception of the author's meaning in the preceding passage, which (from the inaccuracy of the expression contained in the parenthesis) is reasonably to be apprehended, I esteem it necessary to observe, by way of explanation, that the sentiment which it was really intended to convey is no other than the following.

"I do not, for my own part, entertain a doubt, but that a state of servitude, had that state been in reality naturally inconsistent with the true interests of those who serve; would have been prohibited altogether by the wisdom and benevolence of God." Such was the author's sole meaning in this passage; and so far is the argument suggested in it from having any tendency to justify or palliate the system which prevails in our West-Indian Colonies, that, if it be duly prosecuted, no other needs be adduced in order to demonstrate its unlawfulness. The having made this comment, I must plead as my excuse for taking occasion further to remark, that there is an ambiguity in the terms *Masters*, *Servants*, *Servitude*, of which the Author, circumstanced as he was when he preached these Sermons, esteemed it his duty to take advantage.

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He who has never been accustomed to habits of manual industry, will naturally feel in himself a disinclination to such employment, and will consider the practical exertions which it requires as deducting, in proportion to their duration and their intensity, from the sum of human happiness: while the man, whose humble destiny enforces the daily performance of a laborious task, will be as naturally prompted to esteem an exemption from toil the grand constituent of felicity, and to look on that portion of his fellow-creatures who are in the habitual enjoyment of such exemption, as the most enviable of mankind. It requires, however, but little reflection to convince us that the conclusions of each party are alike fallacious, that the fatigue and hardship annexed by the rich man to the daily occupation of the poor, and the exquisite, the almost Elysian enjoyments which the poor man seldom fails to associate with the condition of the rich, have no other than an imaginary being, exist nowhere but in the minds of the conceivers.

I will speak to you upon this subject (without incurring, I hope, the charge of speaking in an improper manner) the language of personal experience and observation. During a residence of several years in a part of England where the evils attendant on a state of indigence are, I believe, as generally felt as in almost any other, the discharge of my professional duties rendered me particularly conversant with the domestick habits of the labouring poor.

I have also had frequent opportunities (derived from a close and familiar view) of estimating the quantum of felicity really enjoyed by persons in a more exalted station. And as far as an attentive and impartial consideration of all that I have seen among those of both descriptions enables me to form an accurate judgment upon the subject, I conscientiously aver, that I believe the rich to be, in general, less happy than the poor. I believe, I mean, that they suffer upon the whole more of real disquietude and pain, and that they enjoy less of real comfort and satisfaction. If the reason of this strange, this seemingly unnatural phenomenon be asked, I know but one satisfactory solution of the difficulty: it is because the rich are but too generally disposed to abuse the bounty of their Maker; and the very noblest blessings, when perverted, become, we know, a curse; or, to explain my meaning in a more particular manner, it is because the vain desires and ideal wants, usually attached to a state of affluence, greatly exceed the means of gratification which it affords. It is true indeed, I fear, that the inferior classes of society are, in every quarter of the globe, still more inclined to indulge their criminal propensities, than the

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the higher; happily, however, for them, the means of gratification are withholden. The all-benevolent Author of our being, well-knowing the depraved temper of the human heart, allows not to the generality of mankind the possession of a talent, of which so few, comparatively, are disposed to make a proper use.

But to return from a digression which has insensibly diverted my attention from the subject of which I was expressly treating. The argument that I was last urging respects the indispensable obligation which lies on every Colonial master, to secure (as far as prudent and equitable regulations on his part can secure) the welfare and comfort of his slaves; the weight of which obligation has been already shewn to rest on this basis; he is bound to do so, because, in the first place, it is evidently the design of Providence that the labouring part of every community should derive from their exertions advantages, in a great measure, proportionate to the services which they perform; and because, secondly, as the labourers in the present instance depend exclusively, for the satisfaction of their wants, on the care and kindness of their master, it becomes his unquestionable duty to make such a provision for the supplying of those wants, as is calculated effectually to accomplish that design. The reasonableness, indeed, of this doctrine, when laid down as a general principle, no one will be inclined to question; when we proceed, however, to consider in what manner it will apply, and to what practical consequences it directly leads, there will not, I fear, be found the same unanimity upon the subject. It has already been observed, that one of the most obvious and important duties required of every Colonial Master, is to supply his slaves with a sufficiency of proper food and clothing; the mode, indeed, in which such provision shall be made, whether, for instance, the articles required shall be issued directly by the master, or shall be left to be procured by the industry of the slave exerted, at stated seasons, for his own immediate benefit, is a thing in itself indifferent, to be determined entirely by local circumstances, and men's particular judgments. Though, however, it be indisputably true, that the labourer who is amply provided with the means of living well, will be capable both of longer, and far more vigorous exertion, than such as are but scantily supplied even with the bare necessaries of life; yet is it equally notorious that the very best and most nutritious food, abundantly afforded, will enable men to undergo only a certain portion of fatigue. Whoever, therefore, compels his negroes to perform a task which exceeds their natural powers, a task, I mean, which cannot

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cannot be regularly completed without gradually impairing their health and strength, stands convicted in the eye both of reason and of revelation (whatever may be his treatment of them in other respects) of one of the most heinous offences that can be named. For that man (let me, my friends, conjure you never to forget) is not alone obnoxious to the charge of murder, who puts a period to human life by a pre-meditated or intentional act of violence, or by means which speedily accomplish the fatal purpose. No—In this place, and at this solemn season, I hesitate not to declare, from the full conviction of my soul, that in the eventful hour, when I shall stand before the tribunal of my Heavenly Judge, to answer for every deed which I have done, I would infinitely rather appear before him as the murderer of my own brother slain in a fit of intemperate passion, than as the quondam master of a gang of slaves, some of whom the dictates of my inhuman avarice had year after year consigned to an untimely grave. If there be any among the present audience who entertain on this head sentiments of a different nature; if there be any who imagine that the Almighty Being will not require the innocent blood (however slowly spilt) of one nation, as much as of another; if, in a word, there be any who conceive that they are permitted to exercise toward that portion of their fellow-creatures who are here entirely subject to their dominion (and therefore peculiarly entitled to their benevolent protection), any other discipline whatever, than such as they could not reasonably deem injurious to their own brothers, or their own children, if placed by Divine Providence in similar circumstances; to such, ere I put a period to this discourse, I esteem it my duty to declare, that while they retain these sentiments, it is impossible for me not to consider them as altogether unprepared for joining in that most solemn rite of our religion which we are now about to celebrate. The sacrifice which was as on this day offered up for the salvation of mankind, was the sacrifice of infinite benevolence that knew not respect of persons. Unless, therefore, we can bring with us to the Lord's table a temper of mind, inclining us to the practice of universal charity, we are, certainly, unmeet to be partakers of his holy supper.

Reserving what I have further to remark (and much yet remains to be remarked) upon this subject for the matter of some subsequent discourses, I shall now conclude the present with ascribing, &c.

PART

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PART THE SECOND.

IN the concluding part of my last discourse, I was endeavouring to impress your minds with a conviction of the flagrant guilt of compelling negroes to undergo immoderate fatigue; fatigue, I mean which, exceeding the measure of their natural powers, cannot be regularly sustained, without gradually impairing their health and strength.

Resuming the consideration of a subject which time would not then permit me to discuss in a manner suited to its importance; I shall now proceed, without further preface, to direct your thoughts to a circumstance of a peculiar and local nature, which well merits your most serious attention. What I allude to, is the practice of converting land, from its naturally rude and unproductive state, into a state of useful cultivation. Now it is, I conceive, a fact universally acknowledged, that among negroes employed by their owners, in draining and breaking up marshy grounds, or in clearing extensive tracts of country of their native wood, an extraordinary mortality generally prevails. But of this mortality there must needs be some correspondent cause: it must of necessity be derived from some peculiar circumstance, or circumstances uniformly operating: and by all who consider the case with impartiality and attention, it will, I doubt not, be confessed, that it can be ascribed with reason to the operation of no other than those which follow, acting, I mean, either separately or with collective force: it must be attributed either, in the first place, to the peculiarly fatiguing nature of the labour wont to be performed by negroes in these circumstances, combined with the rigorous discipline usually required, in order to enforce such labour; or, secondly, to the particular unhealthiness of the situation where they reside and are employed; or, thirdly, to deficiency or unwholesomeness of food; or, lastly, to the large proportion of newly-imported or unseasoned slaves, that may be occasionally employed in such undertakings. With respect to the criminality of those proprietors of slaves, whose cruel and short-sighted avarice either exacts of their negroes the regular performance of an immoderate task, or withholds from them a sufficient supply of nutritious food, I have already spoken; and with regard to the flagrant guilt of inflicting on them, unduly, frequent and vigorous punishments, I shall take occasion to express my sentiments in a subsequent discourse; at present, therefore, it remains for me only to inquire, how far Colonial masters are justified by the laws of

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of natural and revealed religion, in requiring the daily exertions of their slaves, under circumstances known to be most unfavourable to the duration of human life. In order to attain to a right judgment on this question, I shall begin with suggesting the following general reflections.

In the first place I shall remark that, in the estimation of reason, it is a matter of complete indifference, whether the consequences of a mode of conduct, which we are morally convinced must prove fatal to some portion of our fellow-creatures, be particularly foreseen or not: it is the same thing, for instance, whether we put a period to human life, by intentionally discharging our deadly weapon at random, against a promiscuous multitude, or aimed exclusively at an individual.

Men become also (let me further observe) in the judgment of a well-informed conscience, altogether as criminal when they hasten the dissolution of their fellow-creatures, through the instrumentality of other things or persons, as when they produce the same effect through their own immediate act. The military-officer, for example, who, without the sanction of any adequate or patriotic motive, without the prospect or the intention of promoting by his order the interests of his country, or of any individual being beside himself, should command his troops to encounter difficulties or dangers of any kind, from which, he must be fully sensible, many of them will never escape with life, would be, in the contemplation of impartial justice, as truly chargeable with the murder of those men who consequently fell, as if he were deliberately to select an equal number from the ranks, and consign them guiltless to instant execution.

The application of these remarks, to the case of which I am expressly treating, is obvious and direct: no individual mortal can justly claim a right to expose the lives of his dependent fellow-creatures to imminent and inevitable danger, for his own personal benefit. He cannot, for this unanswerable reason; because to endanger the lives of many is, in the event, infallibly to abridge the lives of some; but no man can arrogate to himself the power of shortening, in any measure, the lives of his dependents (a power, let me observe, which it is irrational to deny him, while we acknowledge that he is at liberty to enforce their daily services, in circumstances naturally the most injurious to health). No one, I say, can arrogate to himself the power of shortening, in any measure, the lives of his dependents, unless he can likewise justly claim the privilege of putting a speedy period to their existence; it being utterly impossible to prove the possession of the former right, by any other arguments than such

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such as will prove also, with equal conviction, the possession of the latter.

Let not my meaning, however, be misunderstood with regard either to the nature or the extent of those conclusions, which I design that you should draw from the preceding observations. By some persons, I am aware, it may possibly be inferred from what has been said upon this subject, that it is my intention to represent the culture of marshy or waste lands as a species of labour, which no Colonial master can equitably require of his negroes; but than this nothing can be farther from my design. The cultivation of the earth is every-where, we all know, absolutely necessary to the very existence of civil society: now, to an employment which is so universally and indispensably required, Divine Providence, we may be assured, has not annexed disease and misery as its natural associates; and that, which a sense of religion inclines us, in this instance, so confidently to presume, experience has satisfactorily established; for it is evident to the daily experience of mankind, that in no quarter or climate of the globe is any species of labour absolutely required, for the performance of which the benignant skill of the supreme Architect has not most admirably adapted the faculties and organs of the native inhabitants. It is, therefore, irrational to suppose, that the extraordinary mortality which commonly prevails among negroes, when employed in clearing and breaking up uncultivated lands, results, as an inevitable consequence, from the nature of their occupation: if that occupation be attended, whilst it lasts, with extraordinary fatigue, labour of shorter duration should be exacted; and if the air breathed in such situations be peculiarly injurious to health, every precaution should be used, and every comfort regularly administered, that is calculated to counteract its baneful influence. Nor can we reasonably doubt, but that the adoption of judicious and humane regulations for these purposes will operate, in almost every instance, as an effectual antidote or cure of the evils which we lament or apprehend.

Should the event, however, prove in any case the fallaciousness of this hope and this opinion, I must again strive to impress forcibly upon your minds the doctrine which has already been so earnestly inculcated on this head, *viz.* that as you hope to appear before your master who is in Heaven, exempt from the inexpiable guilt of shedding innocent blood, you must carefully refrain from requiring the daily exertions of your negroes under circumstances thus destructive of their health; no private gain, or personal emolument, that can possibly accrue to the proprietor, will in the least excuse,

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in the judgment of that master, his shortening of the temporal existence even of a single slave. The truth of this doctrine seems, indeed, so perfectly self-evident, that, in the opinion of impartial minds, it will be thought, probably, scarcely to stand in need, or even to be susceptible of further proof. Since, however, it is a doctrine which, beyond all question, does not, and never did universally influence men's behaviour; and since between men's practical conduct and their speculative tenets, between their inveterate habits and their favourite opinions, there is known to be a natural, and often indssoluble union; I esteem it proper to advert in this place to an objection of a rather formidable aspect, which very obviously presents itself to the opposers of the preceding doctrine.

Transcendent good, it will probably be alleged by such, is often unattainable, without some portion of countervailing evil; the metallick substances, for example, which are to prove subservient to the most useful and noble purposes of life, which are to furnish mankind with most of the infinitely diversified productions of mechanick art, and to extend reciprocally to the most distant regions the benefits of commerce, can be extracted from the earth by no other process than such as is naturally most injurious to the health of the employed: even the inestimable blessings of national and civil freedom can be asserted and maintained only by arms, and "*the path of Glory*" (whether of naval or of military glory) the moralizing Poet has reminded us with equal eloquence and truth, "*leads but to the grave.*" Such, then, being the fact, and the same remark being alike applicable to innumerable other cases, to attribute solely to the avarice and the inhumanity of the Colonial master a mortality which happens, in a thousand instances, to the English labourer and mechanick in common with the West-Indian slave, without being by any one imputed, even partially, to the employers of the former, is confessedly most unreasonable and unjust; that mortality ought rather in equity to be considered as a misfortune, naturally attached to the condition of mankind living in a state, and engaged in the occupations of civil society.

Such is the objection which may be urged upon the present subject, and which, we must acknowledge, carries with it a rather formidable appearance. If, however, we can prevail upon ourselves to examine it with an unbiassed mind, we shall soon perceive that its strength may be very easily resisted. For (to speak in the first place of those civil employments which are confessed to be naturally adverse to the human constitution), however truly it may be asserted,

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that the miner who is constantly occupied in extracting subterraneous ores, and the manufacturer who is as constantly employed in subsequently fusing them, are (from the very nature of their work, and of the circumstances attending it) by those means gradually impairing their health, and hastening the approach of death; yet since the dangers which they thus encounter, and the diseases which they thus contract, are all voluntarily incurred, no charge of inhumanity or of injustice can reasonably be alleged against the employers either of the one or of the other: the same reasoning will apply to the masters of all other voluntary labourers. But this, we shall be told, is not the case of our soldiers and our sailors. Let us proceed, then, to inquire whether it be or not. The incomparably major part both of our army and our navy have, it must be confessed, at the time, no adequate inducement of an interested nature to encounter voluntarily the various perils to which they are wont to be exposed; they cannot, I mean, on the eve of an engagement, often expect to derive from eventual success personal advantages, at all proportionate to the personal risque which they are going to incur; though, from the perilous rencounters which they are commanded frequently to brave, it would be to them inevitable death, embittered by the most infamous disgrace, were any portion either of our military or of our naval forces disobediently to recede. And yet, notwithstanding this, it is by no means difficult to shew that it is altogether unwarrantable to argue from either of these cases to that of which we were originally treating. For it must not be forgotten, that unless it be in the case of civil insurrection or rebellion, or of invasion by a foreign power, no British subject whatever is at first compellable to incur the dangers of actual warfare: the impress service extends not either to the formation, or to the recruiting of the British army; whenever it shall, our liberties, with all their attendant blessings, will be no more. The British subject who enlists into a regular corps becomes a soldier solely through his own voluntary and deliberate act; when once, indeed, enlisted, he owes implicit obedience to the orders of his commander; he can claim no discretionary power of deviating occasionally from those orders, or from the rules of military discipline, in conformity with his own private wishes or opinion; implicit, uniform compliance is, I say, his unquestionable duty; and, should he be at any time disposed to resist or to disregard the commands of his superiors, that obedience which such superiors may legally require, they may with equity enforce. To be subjected occasionally to extraordinary dangers, and to undergo extraordinary fatigue,

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is essential to the condition of a soldier, is the very circumstance in consideration of which he receives his daily pay; to shun, therefore, those difficulties and rencounters to which he may be occasionally exposed by the discretion of his commander, is directly to falsify his solemn engagement, and to violate his military oath: and for such commander to refrain at any time from employing his forces in enterprizes of difficulty and hazard, when the exigency of the case demands their most strenuous and magnanimous exertions, must, doubtless, be esteemed by all reflecting minds an equally criminal neglect and dereliction of his official duty. Hence then we perceive, that in the nature of the circumstances, and of the motives which actuate the conduct of the military officer when he exposes his men to the perils and the hardships that are inseparable from a state of actual warfare, and of those which induce the Colonial proprietor to endanger the lives of his negroes, there is an essential and total difference; the former is necessitated so to act by a sense of publick duty, the latter can have no other motive or excuse for what he does, than an immoderate and criminal thirst of gain; the former is, in general, a sharer in all the dangers and all the hardships to which he exhorts his men, the latter, without subjecting himself to any personal risque, is entitled to all the eventual benefits.

After what has been observed upon this head, I have next to consider the case of those who man our fleets; and to these very little of the preceding reasoning seems, it must be owned, to be at all applicable. More than two-thirds of the British navy are well known to have been impressed, to have been at first brought into the service through compulsion, and to be retained in it at present solely by the same means.

The circumstances, also, under which a considerable portion of them have been impressed, must be allowed to entitle them in a peculiar manner to our compassion, and greatly to aggravate the apparent cruelty and oppression of that system, of which they are the exclusive victims.

Such, it is scarcely to be doubted, will be the sentiments of almost every man, when he, for the first time, employs his thoughts on this interesting subject. It is not the part, however, of judicious minds to be entirely swayed by first impressions; let us, therefore, reconsider the case with dispassionate attention. Whatever constitutes the principal warlike strength of a state, we must acknowledge to be essential to the very existence of that state as an independent power: now such is, confessedly, the British navy; if, therefore, the British navy cannot be made to exert, in

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cases of emergency, that prompt and effective energy which is demanded, without the adoption of the system here referred to, it will not be easy to prove by solid argument, that such system is justly obnoxious to the charge of despotism and oppression.

The complaints perpetually made, and the hardships acknowledged to be frequently experienced in consequence of this system, by a class of men so numerous and so highly favoured, as is that of the conductors of our foreign and domestick commerce, cannot possibly have been disregarded by the humane wisdom of our legislature: nor is it in the least probable that the evil, which all humane minds must have continually deprecated and lamented, would have been suffered to remain so long without redress, had there been any practicable mean of preventing, of palliating, or of removing it. The truth in reality seems to be, that notwithstanding the repeated efforts of enlightened benevolence to frame a plan for the speedy manning and effectual recruiting of the British navy, on a principle more consonant with the spirit of British legislation than is that of the impress service, no such plan has hitherto been devised; the persons, therefore, who are employed in the enacting and in the execution of our laws, wisely and benevolently continue to connive at, at least, if not to justify an immemorial practice which sacrifices (or rather appears to sacrifice) the personal liberties of a few, with the sole design of more effectually establishing the political freedom of the many: I say, a practice which *appears* to sacrifice the personal liberties of a few, from a conviction that those liberties are sacrificed in *appearance* far more than in reality; a conviction which I build upon this ground, because I find it impossible to believe that any members whatever, of an independent community, can with justice claim an exemption from those services, on the performance of which the political salvation of that community entirely rests. When *our* country, however, is once engaged in a state of extensive European warfare, we must needs, as rational Englishmen, build (under Divine Providence) almost all our hopes of ultimate success, and of consequent security, on the exertions of our navy; but our ships without our sailors would be as bodies without souls; it is to the professional skill, and the habitual intrepidity of men to whom the dangers of the ocean are too familiar to be formidable, and to those exclusively, that we are indebted for our present as well as for our past decided superiority at sea: man our now unconquerable squadrons with other characters, and glory will no longer follow in their track, their crews will soon cease to be what we may

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now with equal justice and exultation style them, the brave assertors of the independence of their own country, and the generous preservers of genuine (I mean legal) freedom to every other unconquered European nation. The following consideration will tend further to justify the practice of which I am now speaking: indebted as we all without distinction are, for a large portion of the comforts and the blessings which we enjoy, to the wide extent of British commerce, our sailors must be owned to lie in this respect under peculiar obligations, since they derive exclusively from this source the means of their subsistence: but British commerce, we must all be fully sensible, would rapidly decline, would soon become annihilated, were it not constantly protected by the British navy: that service, therefore, which is acknowledged to be thus essential to the daily maintenance of this description of our follow-subjects, is beyond all question peculiarly entitled to their support.

And now to come directly to the point: no apprenticed mariner can ever be with us legally, or with impunity, impressed; and all other British subjects habitually engaged in a maritime life must needs be sensible of the peculiar hardships to which such mode of life invariably exposes them, both at the commencement, and during the continuance, of every war: if notwithstanding this they resolve *not* to forego their wonted occupation, it is evident that a seafaring life, with all its disadvantages, is still, in their estimation, preferable to those laborious employments in which the lower classes of society are usually engaged on shore, and for some one or other of which they could, all of them, soon qualify themselves. To the dangers, therefore, which eventually await them, during the continuance of hostilities, they cannot be truly said to be compulsorily exposed, since those dangers are in fact (and by all our mariners are well known to be) a natural and certain consequence of the occupation which they have freely chosen, and in which they voluntarily persist. I will illustrate this truth by a familiar example. No English publican who has commenced business since the enacting of that law which requires him at times to lodge and to accommodate a certain number of soldiers, can complain with justice of the occasional enforcement of such law; were that law even confessedly in its own nature the most impolitick and unreasonable, yet is he by no means warranted in considering it as injurious to himself; on this self-evident principle, because there cannot possibly be any hardship in suffering that which results as a natural, and necessary consequence from our own deliberate choice.

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What has been said upon this subject is, I trust, sufficient to demonstrate, that there is nothing appropriate, nothing naturally annexed to the profession either of our soldiers or our sailors, which can in the least justify, by way of analogy, the Colonial master in exposing his slaves to immoderate fatigue, or to extraordinary danger of any kind. And this conclusion I might establish on still more solid ground, were I to advert to the different importance of the objects severally aimed at by the commander of an army or of a fleet, and by the owner of a plantation: war, innocent and lawful war, can then alone be waged, when national rights are invaded, when national independence is attacked, or when national security is endangered: I will not insult your understandings by comparing such objects as these with the ends proposed to be attained by the cultivator of Colonial lands.

I shall subjoin, at present, but one remark more upon the subject. Notwithstanding all that has been said, it will still, probably, be alleged by some, that there are circumstances attached to the condition of Colonial labourers, which fully authorize their owners to treat them in a peculiar manner, to require, for instance, of them the regular performance of such services as could not with equity be exacted of any other class of men. But on what ground do men pretend to establish a distinction so unfavourable to the slave? Are we to draw this conclusion from the peculiar formation of his body, or of his mind? I must needs confess, for my own part, that I find nothing either in the pages of the Gospel, or in the history of Human Nature, which in the least warrants such an inference.

But no—the distinction, I shall be told, originates in a principle altogether different; *viz.* in the very nature of his situation, it results by immediate and necessary consequence from his want of personal freedom. The want of personal freedom does indeed (as Christianity repeatedly informs us) firmly bind the slave to pay implicit and uniform obedience to his master's will, in all things not forbidden by the law of God. It is equally true, that the want of personal freedom subjects him, likewise, to a state of almost total dependence on his master.

But does not a state of constant subjection and dependence, let me ask you, give men in return an irresistible claim to the offices of kindness, and to the benefits of protection? Because slaves are conscientiously required steadily to exert their faculties for the exclusive advantage of their employer, is that employer therefore warranted in en-

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forcing services, which cannot possibly be performed without considerable danger and injury to their health?

Peruse, my friends, the volume of your natural religion. Is the beast of the field accustomed to desert her helpless young, or the fowl of the air her callow brood? Is there, in fact, throughout the whole compass of the visible creation, an individual instance of protection and kindness withholden, where protection and kindness are indispensably required? I can name but one class of beings under Heaven chargeable with this unnatural offence: thousands of human parents, it must be owned, have been in former ages known, and are even now, in countries not uncivilized, accustomed annually to abandon and destroy their infant children without remorse. But from the very idea of a crime like this your minds, I know, revolt with horror. Beware then of incurring by other means a degree of guilt equally deserving your abhorrence. It would be difficult to assign any other adequate or final cause of that instinctive tenderness which the God of nature has implanted in the breast of every unperverted mother toward her new-born offspring, than that total helplessness and dependence which are inseparable from a state of infancy; but the Colonial slave, let me again remind you, is almost as much dependent, for the means of living comfortably, and of living long, on the humane conduct of his master, as is the new-born child for its immediate sustenance on the fostering care of its maternal parent. To make, therefore, the dependent and helpless state of negroes a pretence for deducting from their comforts, or for endangering their health, is at once to violate one of the most plain and preremptory commands of natural religion, and to manifest a disposition diametrically opposite to the spirit of the Gospel; for while, under the influence of that Heavenly spirit we must needs, my friends, be at all times led to consider the helpless state of our dependents, as their most effectual protection against oppression, as the sacred armour given them by the Supreme for their defence, through which none but a monster of impiety would ever offer to inflict a wound. Hoping that the interesting nature of the subject, will plead as my apology for the unusual length of this discourse, I have only to ascribe, &c &c.

APPEN-

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APPENDIX.

YOU have now, reader, perused the whole of the two Sermons preached by me on Good-Friday and Easter-day, 1800. The manner in which these unfortunate discourses will be received, when submitted to the final judgment of an enlightened and impartial publick, I must needs anticipate with no small degree of interest and solicitude. Having been actuated, however, both while writing and while delivering them, by a motive far more congenial with the spirit of my religion, than is the desire of human praise, I cannot with reason be disappointed whatever be the sentence which awaits them when regarded as a literary production: but much shall I be disappointed, severely shall I be hurt, if their design and tendency meet not from Englishmen in general with unqualified approbation. I regard my country, Reader, with an enthusiastick fondness, of which those only, who have been long absent from what they most cordially love, can form an adequate conception. But I feel not for her the delusive prepossessions which lovers are wont to feel toward the objects of a different passion; my attachment is not founded on admiration either of superficial or of imaginary charms; no—it is founded chiefly, if not wholly, on the high opinion which I entertain of her intrinsick worth, of her comparative pre-eminence in the scale of Christian nations; and whenever she shall allow herself to be divested of her characteristick moral excellencies, whenever the general tenor of her sentiments and *domestick* conduct (*g*) shall manifest no longer a disposition "parcere subjectis, et "debellare superbos" (*h*), from that moment will she cease to be to the writer of this Appendix, the endeared object which she now is. But I will not suffer my thoughts to be engrossed by an ideal evil, by an event which, I am persuaded, I cannot allow myself for a moment to anticipate, without yielding to a presentiment not less injurious to the feelings of my countrymen, than painful to my own.

In England it will be, I doubt not, matter of surprise to every unbiassed person whom curiosity may lead to peruse the preceding Sermons, that their author should have become, solely in consequence of preaching them, the object of publick execration. Yet from what other cause shall we derive the unquestionable fact? I here confidently chal-

(*g*) Why, alas! do I feel myself constrained to annex this disgraceful limitation to her praises?

(*h*) To curb the *tyrant*, and protect the *slave*.

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lenge the tenacious memory of malignity itself (*i*) to quote a single sentence from any morning or evening discourse of mine delivered in the island of Dominica, or even to repeat an individual expression ever there addressed by me, in publick or in private, directly or indirectly, to any slave or descendant of a slave, which indicated the least intention in the speaker of fomenting Colonial insubordination. Directly opposite to this (I solemnly affirm) was my constant practice, during the whole of my residence in the West-Indies, whenever I addressed my discourse to persons of this description on the subject here alluded to.

To what cause then, it may again be asked, is the treatment which the author has recently experienced from a certain portion of his late trans-atlantick parishioners with truth to be ascribed? On this head the reader will derive, I trust, satisfactory information from the perusal of what I shall now proceed to relate.

On my return to Dominica in the middle of January 1800, after an absence of eight months, I found a report there generally prevalent of my having published, while in England, a very offensive pamphlet on the subject of the slave-trade, and of the Colonial system, with the prosperity of which the perpetual continuance of that trade is considered, by most West-Indian proprietors, as essentially connected. This offence of mine, I further learned, was greatly aggravated, in the estimation of the white inhabitants, by the severe manner in which I was said therein to have animadverted both on publick and private characters in that Colony. Now as it is perfectly natural for the human mind to give implicit credit to its guilty fears, this report was, probably, as readily believed, as, from invidious motives, it was industriously circulated. Hence then the reader will naturally infer the existence of a strong pre-disposition in the minds of "*sundry respectable inhabitants*" (of Roseau), to put the most uncharitable construction on every word and action of their clergyman, which was at all connected with a certain subject. My discourse on Good-Friday was, undoubtedly, but ill-calculated to reinstate me in the favourable opinion of an alienated publick: this, indeed, I must confess, formed no part whatever of my design in preaching it, it being impossible for me not to have been fully sensible

(*i*) The rules of correct writing seem almost to require, that the author adopt in this place the use of the *feminine gender*; moral equity, however, or distributive justice, peremptorily injoining him to prefer the *masculine*, he has been induced (in order to terminate this unnatural contest, respecting *sexual precedence*, in a manner the least objectionable), to express himself in the *neuter*.

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at the time, that for a clergyman to think of conciliating his parishioners, by delivering spiritual prescriptions specifically adapted to the state of their distempered minds, is just as chimerical an expectation as would be that of the surgeon, who should hope to excite pleasurable sensations in the diseased bodies of his patients by means of the caustick or the knife.

After I had announced, therefore, at the conclusion of my first discourse, an intention of resuming the consideration of the same subject on the ensuing sabbath, it is not in the least wonderful, that many persons should have been induced in consequence to become my auditors on that day by motives widely different from those of Christian devotion. And in fact among the male (or criminating) part of my white auditory on Easter-day, I beheld scarcely any other than strange faces; faces, I mean, but seldom seen by me at church. Of these some, I doubt not, were led thither merely by curiosity; but others, I am at least equally assured, attended solely in compliance with the dictates of an unfriendly temper, with a full pre-determination to disapprove and criminate. In these circumstances it ought not, perhaps, to excite surprise, that with the good seed then sown by me the ingenuity of my enemies should have contrived to intermix a considerable quantity of tares; confess, however, I needs must, that, had not experience incontestably proved the fact, I should esteem it morally impossible for them to have intermixed so large a portion as they actually did. The abundant crop of calumnious reports which suddenly sprang up in consequence, and which, in a soil and climate so congenial, attained instantaneously to a state of re-productive ripeness, might almost induce me to regard with other sentiments than those of ridicule the very extraordinary hypothesis of Joseph Mede, for an explanation of which I must refer the curious reader to page 980, Vol. II. of the quarto edition of his learned works; it being utterly incredible that such an harvest should have had any other than a *diabolical* original (*k*). And here, reader, I cannot refrain from remarking (what indeed in a thousand other in-

(*k*) As the reader may not, probably, have it in his power to consult the work here mentioned, I think it proper to subjoin the following quotation from "Mr. Mede's answer to Dr. Twisse his fourth letter touching the "first Gentile inhabitants, and late Christian plantations in America.

"The devil being impatient of the sound of the Gospel, and Cross of "Christ, in every part of the *old* world, so that he could in no place be "quiet for it, and foreseeing that he was like to lose all here, bethought "him to provide him of a seed over which he might reign securely, and "in a place, *ubi palapidarum facta neque nomen audiret.*"

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stances the admonitions of experience have equally taught me to remark) how totally ignorant we are with regard to our real interests. How often have I regretted my inability to utter in publick with any tolerable correctness, even a single sentence that was not "oculis subjecta fidelibus"—legibly inscribed before me. Had I, however, possessed, and on this occasion exercised, the seemingly enviable talent of extemporary preaching, my character, it is highly probable, both as a clergyman and as a subject, would have been irreparably injured; since, according to the unanimous representation of my accusing auditors on Good-Friday and Easter-day, 1800, the doctrine then taught by me was scarcely more at variance with the principles of Colonial subjection, than with those of naval and military discipline; scarcely more adapted to foment a spirit of resistance and insurrection in our transatlantick settlements, than to encourage and excite sentiments of mutinous disaffection in our domestick camps and harbours. And sincerely do I believe that it will be found alike easy to convict the preacher (I mean on equitable grounds) of the one offence or of the other; and that, even though he be judged merely by the actual effect of his Sermons, abstracted from the consideration of his evident design in preaching them: for from the result of all my inquiries upon the subject, (and I took occasion, during the seven or eight days that I spent at Roseau, subsequently to the delivery of my second discourse, to interrogate, in various instances, persons of all others the most likely to know, and, I am persuaded, not less ready to reveal the real truth) from the result, I say, of all my inquiries upon the subject, I scruple not to defy the whole community of Dominica to produce one well-authenticated instance of a negro or coloured person having understood any part whatever of the discourses here alluded to, in the odious sense imputed to them throughout by my accusers, before he was taught or tempted to misconstrue my words by the conversation of a white man. It is my entire conviction that this charge originated wholly in intentional falsehood propagated by personal malevolence (*l*).

Such do I believe to have been the pre-disposing cause and principal occasion of the offence so generally taken at the doctrine preached by me on Good-Friday and Easter-

(*l*) The author speaks in this place, let it be understood, of the effect actually produced by the delivery of his Sermons, not of the one which local prejudices and fears may have induced minds the best disposed, and in other respects the most liberal, to anticipate; his appeal, therefore, in this passage is, properly speaking, from the questionable decision of *opinion*, to the direct evidence of *fact*.

day,

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day, 1800. In order, however, more fully to explain the origin of that general ebullition of resentment, to which the delivery of the preceding discourses (especially of the second) almost instantaneously gave birth, it will be requisite for me to advert to a circumstance at which I have not hitherto even hinted: I allude to that contempt of the negro race, which may with justice be considered as an inveterate disease, contaminating alike the moral and intellectual principles of our Colonists in (I believe) every part of the West-Indies. Of this disease, I could not but discover everywhere indubitable symptoms, soon after my arrival at Dominica; and the same, I am assured, must be equally apparent to every other person placed in similar circumstances, whose mind is equally unsusceptible of contagion. What particular gradation, indeed, in the scale of animated being the Colonial Zoologist may choose to assign this sable race, whether he be disposed to favour the hypothesis of a modern Caledonian sage, and to regard them as—

"*The long lost link uniting man and ape,*"

or to class them conformably with the principles of some other philosophical system, equally approved by natural and revealed religion, I have never as yet been able to ascertain; but that they are generally considered, by the white inhabitants of Dominica, as a race of beings infinitely beneath their European masters in the order of nature, personal experience and observation render it impossible for me to doubt. In confirmation of what is here advanced, I could adduce with ease a variety of unexceptionable evidence; this, however, I shall decline doing from a conviction of its being totally superfluous, from a conviction that no ingenuous person, who has been at all conversant with the system of manners and opinions prevalent in the West-Indies, will pretend to question the powerful and almost universal influence of this injurious prejudice on the minds of Europeans residing in those parts; or even to deny its being a very common thing to hear the white proprietor of negroes justify the treatment, which the natives of Africa are wont to experience from those of Europe, almost entirely on the assumed principle of the natural inferiority of the former (*m*). And now, Reader, carrying with you the recollection of

(*m*) Totally discountenanced as this opinion is both by profane and sacred history, we can yet scarcely be surprised at hearing modern apologists for slavery thus *reason*, when we recal to mind, that the very inventor of the art of *reasoning* * tacitly confessed himself incapable of urging any other more specious plea in defence of the same cause.

* Aristotle.

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this circumstance, imagine that a clergyman were to preach in England, to a country congregation, the identical discourse delivered by me on Good-Friday and Easter-day, 1800, at Dominica, with this sole essential difference, that for the term *negroes*, or *slaves*, or other synonymous expression, he uniformly substitute that of *bullocks*, of *horses*, or of *cattle*; in this case what do you conceive would be the comments of his rural auditory on the parson's doctrine? Why, they would be, I am really of opinion, very similar to those of my enlightened hearers in the Council-chamber of the Court-house (*n*), on Easter-day, 1800. I would not have it, indeed, inferred from what I now write, that I esteem any portion of my trans-atlantick countrymen so entirely brutish, as not to allow to the very lowest of the negro race a decided superiority over every part of the irrational creation: but of this I hesitate not to avow myself thoroughly persuaded, that the treatment which slaves in general experience from their masters in the island of Dominica, is incomparably less adapted to the condition of human nature, when viewed in its proper light, than is the agricultural system which prevails in Great-Britain to that of the domesticated animals.

A further motive which I must needs consider as having materially influenced the conduct of my accusers, is to be derived from the powerful operation of their fears, those fears, I mean, which deduce their origin far less from the compunctions of a wounded conscience, than from the apprehension of impending shame: by the former, indeed, it is my sincere belief that the mental complacency of certain gentlemen is not at all apt to be disturbed; remorse is an affection of the soul, that derives its origin from principles too antiquated and vulgar for generous and expanded minds either to acknowledge their obligation, or to feel their force; to which let me add, that it is with the diseases of the soul exactly as with the distempers of the body; when once suffered to become inveterate, they generally cease exciting in the patient any considerable degree of acute pain. The imputation, however, of misconduct is usually borne with far less heroick fortitude than is the actual consciousness of guilt; and the Christian religion, it is well known, often imparts abundant light even to those insensate beings whom it never warms, as the Sun's reflected beams frequently illumine the nocturnal wanderer, who dreads

(*n*) It was in the Court-house that the author was necessitated to officiate during the whole of his residence in Dominica; the only Protestant Church in that island (a building situated in the suburbs of Roseau) having been suffered, through the economical piety of the Colonial legislature, to moulder into ruins

encountering

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encountering with the upbraiding splendour of his direct rays. Sensible, therefore, as my accusers must needs have been, how utterly impossible it is to reconcile their favourite (however odious) system with those principles and decisions, by which alone a minister of the Gospel can truly estimate its merits, it was, certainly, altogether *natural* for them (though perhaps not altogether *wise*) to act the part which they lately did, *viz.* to manifest an extreme solicitude to prevent all further discussion of the ungrateful subject in the pulpit.

It is in this manner, and in this only, that I can rationally account for the conduct of my accusers on the occasion here referred to. For let the candid Reader but reflect on the substance of the charge exhibited against me, "by sundry "respectable inhabitants in the island of Dominica," as specified in the paper officially transmitted to me on the 15th of April, *viz.* "that two Sermons had been preached on Good-"Friday and Easter-Sunday last, by the Rev. Mr. Peters, "of a nature and tendency the most alarming and danger-"ous, and such as to threaten the destruction and subver-"sion of the Colony."

Concerning the merits of this charge there will be found, I trust, in the country where I now am, but little diversity of opinion; no impartial reader, I am assured, will hesitate a moment to pronounce it totally unfounded and unjust; or to profess himself conscientiously persuaded that there is not a single sentence to be found in either of the preceding Sermons (any one, I mean, at all connected with the West-Indian system) which can reasonably be considered in any other light than in that of a dissuasive from acts of inhumanity toward the enslaved part of the community. And if such doctrine have *a natural tendency to subvert and destroy any of our West-Indian Colonies*, I must leave it to the reader to deduce the obvious inference, and to some others to make the proper application.

I am aware, indeed, that, notwithstanding all which has been above observed, the late conduct of my accusers may yet be ascribed by some to the operation of a motive essentially different from either of those to which it has been attributed by me: human nature, it may truly be alleged, is fully warranted in manifesting her indignant feelings, whenever charged (even by implication) with the commission of a crime of which she is totally unconscious. True, reader; and thus may we satisfactorily account for a mode of conduct adopted by some of my male auditors on Easter-day, which appeared to me, I must acknowledge, at the time, altogether irreconcileable with the rules of Christian decorum:

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rum: I allude to the behaviour of those gentlemen who were pleased to retire *prematurely*, on that occasion, from the house of prayer, impatient, doubtless, to evince in the most expressive manner their righteous indignation, at the doctrine which they had recently heard (*o*). But so likewise, it unfortunately occurs to me, did Hamlet's uncle from the theatre of Denmark; and if Shakespeare were at all acquainted with the internal workings of human nature, such abrupt departure was by no means calculated to attest his innocence; when the horse hastily withdraws his hoof from the searchings of the probe, he indicates, it is generally thought, by doing so, something very different from soundness of the part. Had I, indeed, uttered a single criminating sentence, that could with justice have been considered as personally allusive, I should have merited, unquestionably, striking marks of instant indignation, not only from the individuals particularly aimed at, but from every other auditor. My discourses, however, are now submitted to the inspection of a judicious and impartial publick, neither of them altered, in any instance, by the addition or the erasure of a single significant expression; it is for that publick; and not for me, to decide upon their negative merits in this particular.

Thus much with a reference to the origin of that resentment, which has eventually compelled the author to obtrude the preceding matter upon the notice of the publick.

The papers which the reader will next peruse, though by no means either originally designed, or at present calculated for general inspection, will yet be found, I hope, to derive from their interesting nature that favour and regard to which on account of any other merit they have, certainly, no pretension. In order to explain the history of these papers, it is necessary for me to inform the reader, that on the eve of my embarkation for England, in April 1798 (*p*), I addressed a letter to a Mr. Robert (Judge Advocate, and a member of the Legislative Assembly, in Dominica), of which the following is a copy; I do not mean a literal copy, far otherwise; the matter of the letter with which I now

(*o*) To the circumstance here mentioned I must beg leave to solicit the reader's particular attention. If the gentlemen alluded to were sincerely of opinion that the preacher's doctrine on this occasion was justly chargeable with the criminal tendency imputed to it, what, in the name of common sense, (I must be allowed to ask) could possibly have induced them to adopt a mode of conduct so evidently calculated to realize the danger which they apprehended? Whoever shall allow himself to reflect impartially upon this circumstance will find it, I conceive, impossible to vindicate these gentlemen's intentions, without impeaching their understandings.

(*p*) Vide page 26, line 18.

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present the publick is supplied entirely by my memory, no copy of the original having been taken by me at the time: the occasion, however, out of which it grew, was to me so interesting, and the motives by which I was then actuated are at this season so perfectly remembered, that the printed letter and the manuscript (*q*) will be found, I am convinced, scarcely at all different in sense, however they may differ in expression.

My letter to Mr. Robert was to this effect:—

Roseau, April 1799.

DEAR SIR,

AFTER the conversation which passed between us yesterday, I cannot with reason be surprised if the petition, which I mean to present, for the continuance of my colonial salary during my projected absence, meet with some opposition in the Legislative Assembly; in which case I must needs be sensible on whose exertions I am chiefly to rely for ultimate success.

I esteem it, however, ungenerous and unfair to avail myself of Mr. *R.'s* present intentions, while I suffer him to remain in a state of ignorance with regard to the nature of *my own*. It is, Sir, my determinate purpose to deliver, soon after my arrival in England, into the hands either of Mr. Wilberforce, or of some other conspicuous character embarked in the same cause, certain minutes which I have taken of three recent trials, together with some reflexions and annotations of my own. Of this resolution, you, Sir, I doubt not, will entirely disapprove; but, unless my conscience become far otherwise informed than it is at present, I shall assuredly execute it.

A further reason for my mentioning of this circumstance to yourself is the following: having no other end in view in the present instance, and knowing no other mean by which that end can be accomplished, than such as perfectly accords with the principles of justice and of truth; I am naturally desirous of submitting what I have written to the inspection of one whose judgment and whose principles I so much respect. It is, therefore, my wish and my entreaty, that, after having given the papers with which this letter is accompanied, a deliberate perusal, you will tell me, without re-

(*q*) The latter of which, it is not improbable, may still remain in the possession of Mr. Robert.

serve,

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serve, in what instances my statements appear to you to be incorrect, or my arguments to be inconclusive (*r*).

I remain, &c. &c.

C. PETERS.

This letter, together with the Papers therein referred to, I dispatched to Mr. Robert a few days only before I left the island; in consequence of which I was favoured with his company the following morning. The only part of our conversation at this season, which it is necessary for me to repeat, was to the following effect. Mr. R. observed to me in the first place, that being obliged to repair almost immediately to his plantation in the country, where he should spend the remainder of the week, it was not in his power to comply with my solicitation with regard to the perusal of my Papers: after which, he endeavoured, with earnestness, to dissuade me from the further prosecution of my design (*s*).

His reasoning, however, on this occasion failed altogether of producing the desired effect; the most satisfactory answer which I could induce myself to return to his observations on the subject amounted merely to an assurance, that I would take no decisive steps in this affair, without the privity and the approbation of my most esteemed and most judicious friends. In conformity with which assurance I took occasion, shortly after my return to England, to submit what I had written to the deliberate inspection of a select number of my acquaintance (men whose intellectual powers, and moral principles, I can scarcely appreciate too highly), expressing at the same time a full determination of abiding by the result of their united judgment. Now, of these gentlemen it was

(*r*) I cannot abstain from remarking in this place, that could any thing suggested in the present Work but prompt the person to whom this letter is addressed to employ that local knowledge which he has acquired, and those transcendent abilities which he possesses, in delineating a systematic plan, tending to ameliorate the condition of our Colonial slaves in general, the publick would be infinitely more indebted to the Author of this Pamphlet on that account, than for any service which he is capable of performing merely through his own exertions. Nor can I, indeed, conceive it possible for Mr. R. to employ his time and thoughts in a manner more beneficial to society, or more grateful to his own feelings, than while endeavouring to extend the influence of that humane and equitable system which has proved so eminently successful on his own plantation.

(*s*) One argument enforced by Mr. R. on this occasion I cannot refrain from mentioning: he told me, that by persisting in my resolution I should infallibly incense a certain class of my parishioners in no small degree against me, and thus become less useful in my official capacity; the event, it is almost superfluous to remark, has not falsified the prediction.

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the unanimous opinion, that my papers were of so interesting a nature, as to merit being, at least, shewn to Mr. Wilberforce; when, indeed, they delivered this as their joint opinion, they recommended it to me further (it must be acknowledged) not to impart what they had read to Mr. Wilberforce in any other than a confidential manner. The friendly motive, however, by which they were evidently prompted to give me this admonition, not at all according with those principles by which (as I then thought, and as I now think,) my conduct, on such an occasion, ought to be exclusively directed, I judged it improper to comply, in this respect, with their advice. When, therefore, I waited on Mr. Wilberforce near Bath, in November 1799, for the purpose of conversing with him on the subject of the above-mentioned Papers (papers which I had transmitted to him about a week before), I remember having addressed him, more than once, in nearly the following terms:—"If, Sir, the documents which I leave with you be, in your opinion, at all likely to answer the purpose for which they were intended, I empower and request you to make whatever use of them you please, without regarding, in the least, the manner in which their Author may be eventually affected by their publicity."

To what has been already mentioned on the subject I must not refrain from adding, that the manuscript deposited by me with Mr. W. was the identical one which had been returned to me (I believe unopened) by Mr. Robert, and the very same which had been read some time before by two ladies of Dominica, with whom I had the happiness of being intimately acquainted (*t*): one of those ladies is no more; the other is at this time, I conceive, resident in England, ready, I doubt not, to attest the accuracy, not only of what has been just related, but of what I now proceed to assert finally upon the subject, *viz.* that with the exception of two anecdotes suppressed, of three or four irrelevant, and altogether immaterial sentences omitted, and of a few merely verbal alterations made, the Papers which immediately follow correspond entirely with the manuscript copy perused by herself and her deceased friend.

One thing more, (and one thing only) I esteem myself required to observe on the subject of the ensuing papers, and that by way of apology for the desultory and undigested matter of which they are composed. My reason for com-

(*t*) Ladies, I must be permitted to add, whose local experience, strong and highly cultivated understandings, and (what certainly weighed with the Author far more than any other consideration) still unimpaired philanthropy, rendered them peculiarly fit to be consulted on such a subject.

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mitting them to the press, whilst chargeable with their present numerous imperfections, is exclusively the one which I shall now assign; I am thoroughly persuaded that between the contents (either real or supposed) of the following Papers, and the opprobrious imputations to which the Author's character has been recently exposed, there subsists an intimate relation. I know not, therefore, by what means so effectually to evince his innocence, as by submitting, without reserve, to the judgment of an unbiassed public, the pretended evidences of his guilt (*u*).

THE

TRIAL OF CORDELIA,

A free Woman of Colour, for the Murder of her Female Slave.

ON this trial, Dr. Johnstone (a medical gentleman residing in the town of Roseau) deposed on oath, that on the 30th of December, 1788, he attended, with several others, at the disinterment of a negro girl, who had been buried the preceding morning, and whom Dr. Johnstone recognised for the prisoner's slave. That, on examining the body, he observed marks of recent and of former violence on almost every part of it, viz. that the legs were much swollen, and deeply ulcerated; that the head, neck, and the whole of the back exhibited little else than one continued bruise; that the skin was, in various parts, irregularly blistered, in consequence (this deponent swore) either of boiling water poured on it, or of some other external application of an

(*u*) It will scarcely be deemed superfluous that I here take occasion further to inform the reader, with a reference to the history of the Papers which he is now going to peruse, that those Papers would certainly have been transmitted to the highly-valued friend to whom they were originally addressed, by the very first packet which sailed from Dominica subsequently to the date of the trials which they record, had not the Author, just before the arrival of that packet, suddenly determined on returning to England in the approaching Spring

injurious

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injurious nature (*w*); that the face was bruised all over; and that the deceased had further received a severe wound in her upper lip, occasioned evidently by the teeth having been driven through it; which wound, from its fresh appearance (Dr. Johnstone positively swore), must have been inflicted within three hours before her death. This deponent added, that the skull also appeared to him to have sustained a material injury, but whether from a recent or from a former outrage, he could not affirm. Dr. Johnstone concluded with asserting his entire conviction, that the death of the deceased was to be ascribed solely to the violence which immediately preceded it.

A further witness produced on this occasion was a carpenter by the name of Wright. This deponent swore, that he came to the prisoner's house (in which he was accustomed to take up his occasional abode) on the 28th of December, just before sun-set; that on his entrance he perceived the deceased in the most deplorable condition, with her face so bruised, that he could see only a little of the white of one eye; and, upon the whole, so much injured and exhausted by the violence which had been committed upon her person, as to appear to him at the time by no means likely to survive till the next morning. That, on his questioning of the prisoner respecting the author or authors of this violence, he was told by her, that the deceased had been thus abused by some soldiers on Morne Bruce; this, however, the deponent affirmed, he did not at the time believe, not doubting, from what he had witnessed of her former conduct toward the slave, but that her mistress was the person who had inflicted the wounds he saw. That in the course of the evening he was desired by the prisoner to flog the deceased, which he refused to do (this desire, however, he observed, was expressed, as he then conceived, merely with an intention of intimidating the girl). That about eight o'clock he reclined himself in a chair, at which time he heard the rattling of a chain. On being asked, what inference he drew at the moment from that circumstance; he observed in reply, that he attributed what he had heard to the prisoner's being then employed in the act of confining her slave

(*w*) I was assured, a few days after this trial, by a medical gentleman who attended at the disinterment of the slave, and whose professional skill and long practice peculiarly qualified him for pronouncing a decisive judgment upon the case, that he was then ready (and at the time had expressed his readiness) to declare on oath, that these marks were occasioned solely by a stick, or some similar instrument, made to bend round the girl's body. This gentleman, however, was never summoned to give his evidence in court.

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for the night; he having observed it to be a constant practice with her to fasten an iron collar nightly to the neck of the deceased, to which was attached a chain secured by a weight of 50 pounds. That not long after this he removed to a chamber adjoining to the room in which the deceased was confined. Being interrogated whether he heard any shrieks or unusual noise during the night, his answer was, that he heard nothing of the kind till between three and four o'clock in the morning, when his attention was a second time engaged by the rattling of a chain. He then proceeded to depose, that some time before day-break he was awakened by the prisoner, and requested instantly to get up; the deceased, she said, had robbed her, and made her escape from the house, leaving the doors open: that to this the deponent replied, he knew, from the state in which he saw the slave in the evening, that it was utterly impossible for her to have done so, or even to have effected her escape; that, however, he immediately arose, and having accompanied the prisoner into the hall, there beheld the deceased stretched out upon the floor, with her neck freed from the iron collar; when, on taking her by the hand, he perceived that she was dead: that on his having declared to the prisoner that this was actually the case, her answer was, no, she is not dead, she is only in a trance: that shortly after this the prisoner exclaimed, well, I thank God it was not my doing, for she killed herself. Being asked by whom he supposed the doors to have been opened, the deponent declared himself entirely convinced that they were opened by the prisoner. He further swore, that he told the prisoner at the time, she would certainly be charged by the neighbours with the murder of the deceased, on account of her well-known cruelty towards her. He likewise deposed, that there was a candle brought into the house between the hours of three and four in the morning of the 29th; that he saw the prisoner on that day employed at an early hour (whether before day-break or soon after, I do not remember having heard him say) in washing the floor of the room in which the deceased died; that he could not affirm by what kind of filth the floor had been stained; but that the prisoner informed him it was occasioned solely by a natural discharge from the deceased. In addition to the preceding testimony this witness deposed, that at the time when the prisoner called him from his bed, and afterwards, she appeared in the greatest agitation and perplexity, and repeatedly intreated him to go out in quest of a negro to bury the deceased; that with this intreaty, however, he refused to comply till about six o'clock, when he went out,

and

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and procured a slave to dig the grave, in which, about an hour afterwards, he deposited the body of the deceased wrapt up in a coarse cloth.

The truth of the circumstance last mentioned was attested by the evidence of Capt. Hall (an old inhabitant of Roseau). Capt. Hall deposed on oath, that, having chanced on the 29th of December last to take a morning walk near the negro burying ground, he heard some one remark, there goes another of Mr. Brade's new negroes! a remark occasioned, this deponent added, by a passing corpse, which he saw carried by a slave to the place of interment, the witness Wright attending.

A fourth evidence on this trial was a Mr. Brownsil (a printer residing in Roseau). This witness swore that he lives, and has for some time lived, in a house contiguous to that of the prisoner. That on the 28th of December last, about one o'clock, P. M. he saw the deceased in her mistress' court; that though he did not at the time particularly notice her, it was impossible for her not to strike him as being a most pitiable object, it being with difficulty, he observed, that she could even walk across the court, and every part of her body which he saw exhibiting marks of outrage and disease. He did not, he said, minutely examine her appearance on the 28th of December, for this reason, because he was in the daily habit of seeing her in nearly the same condition, for several preceding months. That he had frequently been an eye-witness of the barbarous treatment which the deceased experienced from the prisoner; had often seen the latter strike her to the ground with her hand, or with any instrument that she chanced to hold, and otherwise inhumanly maltreat her. Being asked whether on such occasions he never remonstrated with the prisoner, the deponent answered, that of late he had declined doing so, having been in repeated instances grossly insulted by her on that account; the reason of her thus insulting him was, he conceived, the following: because he had appeared as a principal evidence against her at a former period, when she was committed on a charge of flagrant inhumanity towards the deceased; since which period the prisoner had been accustomed, when about to inflict a deliberate punishment on the deceased, to shut a door which, before that time, it was her constant practice to leave open; a circumstance imputed by this deponent wholly to her fears, lest he should witness her barbarity; because, on such occasions he always heard a struggle, for which he could no otherwise account than by supposing the prisoner to be then actually employed in torturing the deceased; it was remarkable, however,

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this deponent observed, that neither at those seasons, nor at any other (not even on former occasions, when he saw her the most violently outraged), was the deceased ever known to utter a shriek or cry. This witness further swore, that returning home on the 29th of December last, between the hours of two and three in the morning (the moon then shining brightly), he saw the prisoner pass from her own house to that of a neighbour, and heard her ask for a light; with which request her neighbour told her she was unable to comply.

One of the prisoners modes of torturing the deceased was thus described in court by the witness last named. He swore that she had a large iron instrument, part of which she was accustomed to insert into the mouth of the deceased, and there to secure it by a lock.

This instrument I saw, on two successive days, produced in court: a blacksmith, who was one of the petty jury, acknowledged that he had made it for the prisoner, for the express purpose, as she informed him, of restraining the deceased from eating earth(*x*). The instrument, I should imagine, must weigh nearly two pounds, and it appeared to me impossible that it should be used, without occasioning the most excruciating tortures: yet was this allowed in court to be a species of penal instrument commonly made use of in the West-Indies, and vulgarly known by the name of *mouth-piece;* the size of this particular instrument seemed to be the only thing extraordinary.

Dr. Johnstone (the first witness) confirmed on oath the testimony of Mr, Brownsil in this respect: he swore that he was present when this instrument was taken, by order of the civil magistrate, from the mouth of the deceased; that a part of the instrument came into contact with the tongue, which, at the time when it was taken off, it had corroded almost through, occasioning by that means an ulcer, which (Dr. Johnstone asserted) must have put a speedy period to the sufferer's life, but for the seasonable interference of the magistrate(*y*).

To

(*x*) An insatiable craving after earth is one of the chief diagnostick symptoms of a disease, which the French planter is wont to denominate, Maladie de l' Estomach; a disease, it is to be observed, confined almost exclusively to slaves, among whom it very generally prevails in every part of the West-Indies. This fatal malady (for such it almost invariably proves) is well known to derive its origin solely from a vitiated stomach, a stomach, I mean, which has entirely lost its natural tone through the habitual use of unwholesome food.

(*y*) The interposition of the civil magistrate, in this instance, was occasioned (according to the information which the author has uniformly received upon the subject) by the following circumstance. The mother of

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To the direct evidence above recorded, I think it proper to subjoin the following negative proofs of guilt—viz. 1st. That from the time of the witness Wright's arrival at the prisoner's house, to that of the death of the deceased, no medical assistance appears to have been applied for, nor any care whatever to have been taken of the deceased:—2ndly. That no inquiry was made at the time, or has ever been made since, in order to identify the soldiers who were accused of having outraged her:—3rdly. That the dead body of the slave was never inspected, by any of the neighbours, antecedently to the season of interment:—And lastly, that her death was sedulously concealed by the prisoner from all around her, till suspicion, and consequent investigation, rendered concealment no longer practicable.———Such was the evidence adduced upon this trial; no part of which, I conscientiously aver, was ever contradicted, or rendered in the least suspicious by the testimony of any other witness: yet was the prisoner pronounced, with scarcely any hesitation on the part of the jury, *Not Guilty*.

One observation I must not refrain from making, with relation to the testimony of the witness Wright: it was remarked by a gentleman on the bench, that the account given by him of this transaction in court did not fully coincide with his representation of the case before the magistrates by whom he was at first examined.—This, however, (I must take leave to remark) I should have thought highly probable from the nature of the evidence which he gave upon the trial; his answers in court appeared to me, in many instances, to be evasive and extorted, and were in general perplexed; but for this I thought it very easy to account; the latter circumstance I ascribed, in a great measure, to stupidity of mind (the ordinary effect of habitual intemperance); and the former I imputed wholly to his wish to save the prisoner's (z) life, combined with an apprehension of endangering his own.

of the deceased, having come to Roseau from the country, found her daughter in the state here described, attending on her mistress in the market-place: but for this accidental circumstance, no notice whatever, it is highly probable, would have been taken of the transaction. I leave it to the reader to form his own opinion respecting the social feelings, and the moral temper of that community, the members of which could tolerate for a moment, the sight of such a spectacle.

(z) With whom he was accustomed to cohabit.

THE

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THE

TRIAL OF CÆSAR MORE,

(A free man of colour) for immoderately flogging his slave Charles.

ON this trial, Mr. Browne (formerly secretary to Sir John Orde) attested upon oath, that he was called on, some time in Sept. 1798, in the capacity of town warden, to interfere in behalf of a Negro belonging to Cæsar More, who was reported to have received at one time 150 lashes. ——That in consequence of this requisition he went (accompanied by a Mr. Gray, clerk of Roseau Market) to the defendant's house; and was conducted into a room, where he found the Negro Charles lying on the floor, with an immoderate iron collar around his neck, connected with a chain proportionably large, which chain was fastened to a block of more than 100 pounds weight:—That on desiring the slave to get up, he found him incapable of complying; —that the deponent, however, (with the assistance of Mr. Gray) having lifted him up, discovered on inspecting his body that from the lower part of the back, down to the extremity of the thighs, there was one continued wound, encrusted entirely over with clotted blood.

Mr. Browne further swore, that having pressed the injured parts with his finger, they discharged pus and gore.—He concluded his evidence with deposing, that the Negro was at this time in so high a state of fever, as to be apparently in extreme danger; and that he expressed this as his opinion to the defendant, whom he injoined to take all possible care of the sufferer, as he regarded his own life.

Mr. Gray (the person above alluded to) being sworn, corroborated the truth of Mr. Browne's relation, and deposed further to the following effect;—that in compliance with Mr. Browne's desire, he attended the slave daily for a fortnight, at his master's house, in order to see that proper care was taken of him, and proper medicines administered; at the expiration of which time the Negro was so much recovered as to be, in appearance, altogether out of danger.

A third witness produced on this trial was a Mrs. Buardsell, (a widow lady of Roseau). Mrs. B. deposed on oath, that her grounds are contiguous to those of the defendant, whither he was in the habit of bringing his Negroes for the purpose of inflicting on them corporal punishment.——That in the present

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sent instance (some time in Sept. 1798,) her attention was arrested, within her house, by the flogging of the Negro Charles, till she had heard the whip resound between fifty and sixty times; when finding that the sufferer ceased to utter any further cries, though the strokes of the whip were still continued, and hearing some one near him exclaim, "*He's dead!*"——compassionate curiosity drew her to a spot from which she could distinctly view the whole of the transaction :—that she there beheld the slave stretched out, and lashed down in the usual manner, apparently altogether senseless, but still flogged by the driver,—the defendant at the same time beating him about the head with a stick, and vociferating that he had not received half punishment enough; —that she then hastened into the street to call a magistrate; whence she still heard the lashes continued, till the distance was too great for hearing.

This deponent further swore, that she had been before, in repeated instances, a spectator of the defendant's inhuman treatment of his slaves; and that she would have complained to a magistrate on that head much sooner than she did, had she not previously understood that every proprietor of slaves was perfectly at liberty to punish them as he chose: she mentioned in particular, that she had sometimes heard the cries of the defendant's Negroes continued for three hours together, longer, she affirmed, than she had before conceived life could possibly be retained under such agonies(*a*).

No

(*a*) In consequence of what I heard on this occasion, I was, shortly afterwards, induced to question on the subject two of Mr. W's watchmen, whose lodges stand in the vicinity of Roseau, and near the spot alluded to. One of these men replied to my inquiries, in the evasive manner which is natural to degraded minds; but the other, struck with the force of my remonstrances, ingenuously confessed, that (without any leave obtained either from Mr. W. or his manager) himself and brother watchmen were in the constant practice of flogging, for a small gratuity, all such slaves as were brought to them for that purpose, and that they were on such occasions accustomed to inflict upon the sufferers whatever punishment their owners might prescribe; which punishment, he acknowledged, was often severe in the extreme. In confirmation of this testimony, I was assured, about the same time, by a person of unsuspected veracity, residing near the place of execution, that in consequence of the heart-rending and long continued shrieks of the poor creatures so punished, which were daily resounding in — (*) ears, — had often entertained serious thoughts of relinquishing — habitation. I would not, indeed, be understood to insinuate in the preceding passage, that these clandestine chastisements are always, or even generally imputable to peculiar cruelty of temper. The most lenient proprietor of slaves will sometimes, doubtless, be necessitated to order their corporal correction; and as the ignominy of being punished by the hand of the common executioner (who, it is to be observed, is always

(*) My reason for not inserting in this passage a word which, by disclosing the sex of my informant, might tend to identify the person, the sagacious reader will readily conjecture.

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No evidence whatever having been adduced, on the part of the defendant, tending to contradict or to invalidate any part of the preceding testimony, the jury found him *Guilty:* in consequence of which he was fined by the Bench, in the penalty of twenty-five pounds currency. (*b*)

THE

TRIAL OF A FREE MULATTO,

Named John Stewart, for the cruel treatment of his female slave, some time in the year 1797.

IT appeared from the deposition of a Mr. Lecorn (a French planter) that the slave above mentioned had been purchased (*c*) by the defendant out of the public gaol, to which she had been committed in consequence of her marooning, (or running away from her master into the woo s) (*d*)——that she had been unhealthy from her childhood;—and that when Mr. Lecorn parted with her to the defendant, she was afflicted with the disease, which the French denominate maladie de l'estomach, and was full of sores and ulcers.

This witness further observed in the course of his examination, that having heard a report of the girl's improved health, soon after she became the property of the defendant, he was much surprised at it, as her former owner (this deponent said) could make nothing of her.

Another

always ready to inflict in the publick market, on any Negro sent to him by his master's order, as many as thirty-nine lasnes) is frequently more dreaded than the punishment itself; the watchmen above referred to, it is out reasonable to presume, are often employed by mistresses and masters solely from a principle of tenderness toward their offending slaves.

(*b*) Equivalent nearly to fourteen pounds sterling.

(*c*) Either of Mr. Lecorn the witness, or of a relation of the same name.

(*d*) That the practice of *Marooning* among our West-Indian slaves, (at least in the Island of Dominica), is occasioned chiefly by the fragrant and habitual cruelty of their masters(*), no dispassionate and experienced person will pretend to question, since nothing but the sense of extreme misery could ever prompt men to encounter voluntarily with the dangers and the hardships that are inseparable from such a course of life. The life of a Maroon, Reader, renders him liable perpetually to be hunted down (i. e. taken

(*) I mean by the word *masters*, in this place (and in various other passages), those persons who exercise immediate jurisd ction over slaves; this term, therefore, in the present work is, perhaps, not more frequently applied to the proprietors of Negroes, than to the managers.

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Another evidence produced upon this trial, was Mr. Constable senior, (a very old inhabitant, and magistrate of Roseau)——This deponent swore, that, in Sep. 1797, he was entreated by some of his neighbours to step across the street in order to prevent the murder of a female slave.——That the slave was then shrieking in an adjacent house, where this deponent found her master beating her, in the most inhuman manner, with a knotted rope as large as this deponent's two thumbs; and that the defendant persisted in striking her, in this deponent's presence, until he was forcibly restrained,—he asserting it to be his unquestionable right to treat *his own property* as he pleased.

Mr. Constable proceeded to inform the court, that at the time when he rescued the slave from the brutality of her master, she was in a very infirm state of health, and so much injured and exhausted by the blows she had received, as to be incapable of rising from the ground without assistance. ——It was deposed further by Mr. Constable (and his deposition in this respect was corroborated by that of another witness, whose name I forget) that the defendant was in the habitual practice of severely beating this unhappy slave; the only reason assigned by him for doing which, was, her refusal to take some medicines prescribed by him.——Mr. Constable finally swore, *that the slave died within forty-eight hours after she had been rescued by him, from the barbarity of the defendant.* This defendant (I am ready to attest on oath) produced no one witness whose evidence tended, in any degree whatever, to exonerate him from the charge alleged against him, or that was at all favourable to his general character, which character was publickly impeached, by Mr.

taken either alive or dead) by any military or civil sportsmen, who may be appointed, or who may feel disposed to engage in the pursuit. Of these unhappy beings, however, the small Island of Dominica was supposed to contain, in the year 1797, nearly 400. The danger naturally to be apprehended from so numerous a body, if permitted deliberately to form and execute their desperate schemes, imposed it, doubtless, as an indispensable duty upon the guardians of the colony, to adopt such measures as were best calculated to reclaim and subdue the fugitives. Those measures his Excellency Governor Johnstone did adopt, and that with such promptitude and judgment, that in the course of a few weeks every formidable party of Maroons throughout the island was dispersed, and a considerable number prevailed on to surrender. But a few of these pitiable beings (I feel happy in being able to inform the reader) were shot by the military. a great many of them however (according to the report of those who surrendered) persisting in their resolution *neither to submit, nor to be taken*, perished through hunger in the woods. Nothing certainly can be farther from my thoughts, than a design to criminate either those who planned, or those who executed the measures here referred to; the system, however, which renders it necessary frequently to have recourse to so severe a remedy, I cannot refrain from reprobating in terms the most unqualified.

Constable,

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Constable, as being notorious for habitual brutality and violence. Yet was he pronounced by the jury—*Not Guilty*. (*e*)

These three trials occurred at the grand sessions holden at Roseau, in the Island of Dominica, on the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th of February, 1799.——I heard distinctly the whole of the evidence adduced on each, and took down the preceding minutes immediately on my return, each day, to my own house. These I have subsequently revised, and am now ready (and of course shall be so at any future period) to certify their accuracy and impartiality on oath. (*f*) I shall now add to them the following remarks——I was not in court, when the penalty of twenty-five pounds currency was imposed on Cæsar More, for the offence of which he was convicted; but I have since learned from the very best authority, that he was thus leniently dealt with in consideration of the uniform propriety of his former conduct. How far he merited any mitigation of punishment on that account, you will be more competent to judge when you have read what I am now going to record.——The following anecdote was related to me, *vivâ voce*, by the person who ocularly witnessed the transaction. (*g*)—Soon after the capture of Martinique(*h*), this person saw Cæsar More bring to a spot in the vicinity of Roseau a Negro woman and her son, (a lad at the time about ten years of age), for

(*e*) The event of this trial, combined with the circumstances which occasioned it, entitles it in an especial manner to the attention of the reader. More than a year, it is to be remembered, was suffered to elapse before the defendant was put upon his trial; and when tried he was pronounced by a British jury, *guiltless even of inhumanity toward the hapless being, whom he had unquestionably murdered.* I say, *unquestionably murdered*, on the following ground; because, if the deceased slave were in no immediate danger at the time when she became the object of her master's fury, to what else shall we ascribe her death so shortly after; whilst, if she were, the personal outrage which she then experienced, must, without doubt, have hastened, and proximately caused her dissolution.

(*f*) I judge it proper to mention in this place, that I took occasion (during the interval between the writing of these minutes, and the season of my embarkation for England in April, 1799) to shew that I had recorded as the evidence given in court, by Dr. Johnstone, Mr. Browne, and Mrs. Buardsel, to those several witnesses, each of whom acknowledged the entire accuracy of my written statement.

(*g*) Truth delighting in the mention of particulars (though charity frequently does not), the name of this informant is to be found in the manuscript left by me, with Mr. Wilberforce: as is also that of another person, from whom I had received similar intelligence, but whose name I now esteem it improper to reveal. In that manuscript occur, likewise, two other names, not to be met with in this work, viz. that of the *Legislator*, who bailed Cordelia, and that of the blacksmith, who constructed the mouth-piece for her murdered slave. These, however, are the only persons nominally mentioned in the original papers, whose names I have suppressed in the present publication.

(*h*) In 1793, the

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the purpose of punishing them.—He first lashed down the parent, and made a watchman, belonging to a Mr. Winston, give her a most seve e flogging; my informant could not pretend to specify the exact number of lashes, but was certain that they exceeded what the colonial law in any case allows, viz. thirty-nine.

Cæsar More then, in the presence of the mother, tied down the child, and made the watchman flog him, till the heart of the executioner (steeled as it must have been by habits of mercenary cruelty) constrained him to refrain from inflicting further punishment:—Cæsar, however, insisted on the lashes being still continued; and threatened, in case of refusal, to send for another executioner; but in vain, the watchman could not be prevailed on to give him another stroke: Cæsar then himself beat the child, about the head and neck, severely with a walking stick.

Seven or eight days afterwards my informant saw the lad crying in his master's garden; on going up to him, and inquiring into the cause of his tears, my informant learned from him,—that his master had sent him to plant guinea grass, but that he was incapable of working, *for his flesh was mortified.*—My informant upon this took off the rag which covered the child's posteriors, &c. &c. and found that the parts which it concealed were entirely excoriated; the expression made use of by my informant was, *the black was all gone.* My informant then hastened to the house of a neighbour, whom compassion for the sufferer led to dispatch one of — own slaves to work in the boy's stead, and thus obviate further inhumanity toward him. The lad (continued my informant) remained crying in the garden till the hour of dinner, employed principally during that time *in picking out the maggots from the injured parts.*

I might relate other circumstances (*i*) which would greatly agravate (if it be possible to aggravate) this monster's guilt. Sufficient, however, I conceive, has already been observed, respecting an offender who is said to have experienced the lenity of the bench, solely on account of the goodness of his general character: what opinion must we form of a society, in which such a member is so regarded?

Cordelia, (the person acquitted of the crime of murder, merely because, as it was alleged, there was nothing but *presumptive evidence* against her,) was, on the day subsequent to that of her acquittal, convicted on the charge of

(*i*) Here follow in the original, the anecdotes alluded to in page 35; as the part suppressed however, merely records two other instances of Cæsar More's barbarity (of which the reader has, doubtless, already had but too convincing evidence), I deem it superfluous to publish it.

flagrant

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flagrant barbarity toward her deceased slave, and condemned to imprisonment, for the space of one year, in the publick gaol; after which period she will again, of course, be perfectly at liberty to treat in a similar manner as many other Negroes as she can contrive to purchase (*k*). With regard to the murdered slave, I think it proper further to observe, that at the time of her death she did not exceed the age of seventeen. She belonged originally to a Mr. Bouee (a gentleman well known as a practical and literary botanist, and one of the most respectable planters in Dominica). Mr. Bouee told me, that the girl had resided for some years, as a domestick servant, in Roseau, to which place she was very much attached. Mr. Bouee, however, requiring her labour on his plantation (which is some miles distant from Roseau), her aversion from that service, combined with the delusively conciliating conduct of Cordelia toward her, rendered her anxious to be exchanged by her master for a female slave belonging to that woman. On being gratified in this respect, her expression (Mr. Bouee told me) was, *God has been very good to me in making me the slave of Cordelia.* The other girl was equally rejoiced at the exchange; the reason of which joy soon became manifest, for her garments having been taken off whilst working in the field, marks of the most savage violence appeared on every part exposed; and it was shortly afterwards discovered, that one of her wrists had been dislocated by her former owner; in which part (I was informed by Mr. B.) she remains feeble at the present hour. This girl (I learned from the same authority) possesses a most tractable temper; and the deceased (I have also been assured by the lady with whom she lived in the capacity of a menial servant, for the space of three years), was remarkable for her fidelity, and the amiableness of her disposition.

I have already mentioned that Cordel a was committed to gaol, in consequence of her extreme barbarity to the deceased, a few months before her trial for murder; but what must you think of men's feelings, and regard to character in this quarter of the globe, when you are informed, that the inhuman wretch had scarcely been confined, when she was bailed by a member of our legislative assembly? or what of our magistracy, which permitted her to retain the power of torturing her slave, after such instances of extreme barbarity.

Concerning John Stewart, I shall only add to what has

(*k*) I rejoice at having it in my power to inform the reader, that when I quitted Dominica, in April, 1800, this woman was stil confined in the publick gaol, from inability to discharge the customary fees.

already

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already been recorded, that there still survive two unhappy beings, who are daily obnoxious to the effects of his diabolical malevolence and passion.

Conclusion of the first part of the papers deposited by the Author, with Mr. Wilberforce, in November, 1799.

I ESTEEM it necessary to inform the reader, with relation to what he will next peruse, that, at the time when I left my papers with Mr. Wilberforce, I had searched in vain for the loose sheet on which I remembered having inscribed the minutes of this fourth Trial. Not long since, however, I fortunately recovered it, and now present the publick with a *literal copy* of its contents. I think it also proper to remark further upon the subject, that, having taken down these minutes after a lapse of some months from the date of the trial, I had forgotten at the time of writing them, not only the names of the defendant, and of the witnesses, but the precise amount of the pecuniary fine. Of this, however, I am certain, that the penalty exacted appeared to me at the time so very inadequate to the offence, that I could not but consider it as a virtual incitement to similar barbarity. The contents of the manuscript alluded to are *literally* these.

"Some time (I believe) in April or May, 1798, I was present at the trial of a cause in which a woman of colour was indicted for the cruel treatment of her female slave. It was acknowledged by the defendant, that this slave (previously to her enlargement by the town-wardens) had been confined in a back room, for the space of nine months. The following was proved (indeed owned) to have been the mode of her confinement. A chain, to which a weight of fifty or sixty pounds was attached, was constantly fastened to her neck, by day and night. This chain was sufficiently long to admit of her going to a room below, for the purpose of performing her daily task (the nature of which I did not learn); and at night another chain was fastened to one of her ancles, with an additional weight of twenty-five pounds affixed. When the town-wardens first visited her in the place of her confinement, they found her emaciated and diseased in no small degree; where the chain was nightly fastened to her ancle, the iron had corroded the flesh to the very bone; and from the length of time, during which she had been so chained, the lower part of the leg (for the chain was always

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fastened to the same) was greatly swelled, and the calf proportionately contracted in size, the muscular parts of it having become quite shrunk and flaccid. The only reason assigned by the mistress, for this treatment, was the slave's being addicted to running away. The mistress, being found guilty, was fined to the amount of seven joes(*l*). From what occurred at this trial, and from what I learned from the town-wardens, and several other persons afterwards, I had ample reason to believe, that the slave had been subjected to this barbarous confinement *for two years*. The mistress had sold her before the trial commenced(*m*)."

Before I proceed to submit to the inspection of the reader the remainder of the papers deposited by me with Mr. Wilberforce, I must take leave to obviate an objection which very readily presents itself to the judicious mind, after the perusal of the preceding minutes. The objection to which I refer respects the *peculiar class* of mistresses and masters whose cruelty has been above recorded.

The acts of inhumanity related in the foregoing pages were committed (it will be said) solely by people of colour; whence the following conclusion, it should seem, may be very legitimately drawn; viz. that the Author is unable to tax persons of a different description with similar barbarities.

In answer, however, to this objection it would be, I conceive, sufficient for me merely to observe, that whenever men, on whom it is officially as well as socially incumbent to protect and redress the injured, by punishing the guilty, either totally acquit the notorious delinquent, or treat him with such inhuman lenity as can tend only to legalize oppression, they become, through their neglect, joint partakers in his guilt, and ought, therefore, equally to partake in the ignominy which *should* accompany it; since by thus shewing mercy, without judgment, they manifest, to the discerning eye, that radical defect of steady principle which must in-

(*l*) Such is the sum specified in the original manuscript; I will not pretend, however, to vouch for its perfect accuracy.

(*m*) With regard to the circumstance last mentioned, I must take occasion to observe, that what was stated in court by the defendant's counsel respecting the transferring of this slave to another owner, was extremely incorrect; such transfer (as I was afterwards credibly informed) having been entirely nominal, a merely collusive bargain, that originated wholly in the defendant's fears, lest she should otherwise be judicially deprived of property which she had so inhumanly abused. I learned upon this head, in answer to my last inquiries upon the subject, that the slave was then perfectly exempt from the personal jurisdiction of her real owner, and living contentedly and happily with the person to whom she had been fictitiously transferred. The former, however, it is sufficiently evident, may remand her property whenever she shall be pleased to do so; the reader will readily deduce the intended inference.

fallibly

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fallibly incline them, at other times, to exersise judgment without mercy. But in fact, the Author needs not on this occasion have recourse to argument; he *does know* instances (instances too many, and too well authenticated) of such inhuman acts, committed by white persons in the Island of Dominica, as would extract (were he but permitted to relate them) tears of mingled pity and indignation from the eye of every reader not altogether callous to sympathetick and virtuous feelings. He presents the publick with the following as a sample.

There is now (at least there was in April 1800) living at Roseau an unhappy Negro girl, who, soon after the author's embarkation for England, in the spring of 1799, was charged by her mistress(*n*), on her return in the evening, with having purloined some trifling article (or the price of some trifling article)(*o*) which she had been exposing during the day for sale.

Such was the crime alleged; the following was the punishment inflicted. An instrument, well known in the West-Indies, by the name of the Barbadoes Glove(*p*), was immediately fastened on both her hands by the agency, or by the order of her mistress, and suffered to remain on till the next morning; it was then taken off, but the parts affected had by that time assumed an appearance so alarming, that her owners(*q*) judged it prudent to apply, without delay, for medical

(*n*) I derive pleasure from being able to inform the English reader, that this lady is not his country-woman.

(*o*) The article mentioned to the author was a candle.

(*p*) Never having seen the instrument alluded to, I am, of course, unable to describe with accuracy its particular construction; it is made, however, (as I have been assured, by those whose humanity has occasionally constrained them to release the helpless sufferers, from its agonizing tortures) of thin pieces of wood, fitted for insertion between the fingers, which (by means of a screw, or something similar) the tormentor is enabled to constrict as forcibly as he pleases.

(*q*) Whether the husband of this lady were, or were not at home, when the instrument was first affixed, I did not learn; but that he became, in the course of the evening, perfectly acquainted with the situation of the sufferer, sufficiently appears from the nature of the plea, which he urged in his defence the next morning, to Dr. Greenway, viz. that he was not at all aware of the consequence which ensued. Respecting this person I esteem it proper to remark, that, with the single exception of his conduct in the present instance, I never heard his name mentioned but with commendation. The very same thing, however, I might, with equal justice, say of the Mulatto woman, who subjected her female slave to a mode of confinement, the most inhuman, for two successive years; her character also (I have been repeatedly and credibly assured) was altogether unimpeached, antecedently to the commission of the offence, of which she was convicted. But what inference shall we thence deduce? The author's ingenuity,

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medical assistance. A gentleman of the faculty, by the name of Greenway, was consequently sent for; but no sooner had he examined the injured parts than (with that regard to humanity and justice, which suits alike his professional and his private character) he refused to perform any operation on the patient before her situation had been noticed by the civil magistrate: three such, therefore, were instantly solicited to attend; and in their presence, or soon after their departure, Dr. Greenway proceeded to amputate, above the wrist, one of the girl's mortified hands: the other he at that time hoped to save, but, after the expiration of three or four days, found himself necessitated to take off the whole of that also, the fourth and fifth fingers alone excepted. *This memorable fact* was related to me in the beginning of 1800, by a lady of Roseau, who derived her information on the subject from Dr. Greenway himself, and who has personally examined the slaves mutilated limbs. Yet *have not the perpetrators of this horrid act ever once been brought even to a trial for their offence*; that they have not will utterly astonish, I cannot reasonably doubt, the minds of *untravelled Englishmen*. That three magistrates(*r*), after having ocularly witnessed, in their official capacity, this instance of extreme and deliberate barbarity, should have taken no further notice of the transaction; and that no one of the many neighbouring families, who must, infallibly, have soon become acquainted with the particulars of the case, should have demanded the punishment of the offenders, must appear, I am assured, almost incredible in the country where I now write; a country, the inhabitants of which, well knowing (God be thanked!) from happy and long experience, that the grand object which legitimate government has in view, is effectually to protect those who are unable to protect themselves, would rise, I trust, indignant, even against their present beloved Sovereign, were he to attempt shielding from the arm of justice, violated in the person of an helpless female, delinquents such as those whom I have above described.

I shall now proceed to lay before the reader the remainder of the papers entrusted to Mr. Wilberforce by the author, when he last embarked for the West-Indies.

genuity, he must acknowledge, enables him to draw no other conclusion from it than the following, viz. "if these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?" in other words, if persons reputed *good* do not refrain from acting with such detestable barbarity, what bounds can we reasonably set to the cruelty of those who are notoriously *wicked*?

(*r*) With whose names (one excepted) the author is unacquainted, having purposely declined informing himself on that head.

Dear

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Dear ———

Soon after the receipt of this, it is my earnest and solemn request to you, that you transmit the enclosed minutes, either to Mr. Wilberforce, or to some other member of the British legislature, who is well known to possess the feelings and theprinciples of an Englishman, and a Christian. I cannot induce myself to believe that the members of that legislature are sufficiently acquainted with the real effects and concomitants of slavery: had they been, they would not, I am assured, have so long postponed ameliorating a system which, experience daily more and more convinces me, is pregnant with every species of physical and moral evil.

How far, indeed, the British parliament may be deemed at liberty to enact laws interfering with the internal government of these colonies, I know not; such interference may, probably, be esteemed by many a flagrant violation of political faith. But there is one thing to which that body is confessedly competent, I mean *the abolition of the slave-trade.* I shall not at present speak of the injustice and the inhumanity of that trade, as it now is, and as it must ever be conducted, fully as I am convinced of both: nor need I immediately advert to the lamentable consequences awaiting the individuals about to be imported. The *abolition, the speedy abolition of the slave-trade,* is a measure intimately connected with the welfare and the morals of those Negroes who are already here. I build my opinion in this respect on the following grounds, the sufficiency of which I doubt not but every impartial and considerate person will readily acknowledge.

All slaves brought to these islands from Africa arrive in a state of barbarism, arrive, I mean, with minds scarcely at all influenced by a sense of moral obligation, uninstructed alike in the principles of natural and of revealed religion, regardless of the laws by which property is secured, and totally inattentive even to external decency. Of beings answering to this description, there were imported into this small colony, in the course of the last year, considerably more than 1000(*s*). The immoral tendency of such an annual importation

(*s*) I allude in this passage to the importation which took place in the year 1798. It appears, however, from the contents of an official paper put into my hands on the eve of my last departure from Dominica, that what the Author has here advanced, respecting the number of native Africans, purchased by the inhabitants of that colony during the period above specified,

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tation is too evident to require a proof: but, to enable you to ascertain the real magnitude of the evil hence resulting, it is requisite that you be informed, what is the character of those persons with whom such newly-imported Negroes are destined to associate. On this head, therefore, it is proper for me to acquaint you, that on all plantations, and in all large gangs, they must needs meet with a considerable number of native Africans. Now in these (notwithstanding the most favourable change that can be imagined to have taken place in their principles and manners, since their arrival) it is irrational not to allow that there must still remain a strong propension to their former habits. You are not, however, to suppose that Africans by birth are the only people likely to be contaminated by the influence of bad example. The character of the Creole Negro differs, it must be owned, materially from that of the Native African; but the difference, with few exceptions, consists almost exclusively in this,

specified, is, probably, erroneous; it being stated in that document, that, of such, no more than seventeen or eighteen hundred had been actually retained in the island during the three years immediately preceding. I learned, also, from what was then shewn to me, that during the same space of time the mortality among slaves of all descriptions in the colony, collectively considered, had been exceeded by the natural increase; whereas, according to the representation of sir John Orde(*), "on an average for "five years, from March, 1783, to March, 1788, there were

			Slaves.
"Born - - -	in Dominica	- - -	6,748
"Died - - -		- - -	6,020"

I communicate this intelligence to the publick, because it establishes two important and interesting facts; viz. first, that the treatment of Negroes in the Island of Dominica has been of late years incomparably less oppressive and iniquitous than it was formerly wont to be: and, secondly, that in order to keep up the present stock of slaves in one part, at least, of the West-Indies, it is no longer necessary to have recourse to an annual supply from Africa. Thus much we are unquestionably justified in inferring from the preceding statement. There are, however, other seemingly warrantable conclusions, which I must warn the reader not to draw from it. It is not for instance, to be inferred from it, that the system generally adopted in the Island of Dominica, during the time alluded to, has been such as justice and humanity prescribe. The breed of horses in this country is well known to have increased considerably during the last century; and yet no one, it is to be presumed, will thence pretend to argue, that those noble animals have not been subjected in England, during that period, to the most cruel and injurious usage. Nor is it at all more rational to infer from the diminished number of native Africans, imported into Dominica, during the space of time above mentioned, that the demand for new Negroes in that colony will still continue to decline; the reasons, however, which incline the author to deny this consequence, must be reserved for the matter of a subsequent note.

(*) This passage is extracted from page the 16th of a pamphlet, published in the year 1789, and entitled, No Abolition.

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that the Creole slave has superadded to the criminal propensities and practices which mark a nation in a state of barbarism, almost every vicious habit and inclination, which is peculiar to civil society(*t*). But yet, unhappy and degraded beings! those vices are not imputable to them: the same enlightened race whom avarice impelled to enthral the body of the parent, are equally successful, under the influence of other passions, in enslaving the souls of his descendants. And, indeed, if manners naturally and invariably descend (as I have been ever wont to think) it is absolutely impossible that it should be otherwise. Religion is here contemned; the God of Christians is dethroned(*v*); what other power our colonists have chosen to worship in his stead, you will learn from the documents enclosed. I write now, ————, (and it is not the first time that the same cause has produced the same effect) with the tears flowing from my eyes; but they are less the tears of pity than of indignation. Since I have been possessed of those evidences of human cruelty which I now transmit, imagination has been continualy presenting to my view spectacles, which my soul abhors to look on, but which reason compels me to believe are not ideal.

In this town, the number of white inhabitants, compared with that of free people of colour, is scarcely as one to seven(*w*): of the latter, however, as well as of the former, a very considerable part are possessed of slaves: now if only a very small portion of these mistresses and masters, resemble but faintly in disposition those persons whose barbarity I have recorded, what tortures, must I not needs believe, are hourly practised by them in secret, on the unhappy victims

(*t*) It will naturally be inferred by the judicious reader, from the description here given of the manners and dispositions severally appropriate to the recently imported Negro, and to those with whom he is destined to associate, that the influence of example is likely to prove most baneful to the former. Allowing this, however, (as indeed we needs must) to be actually the case, we may yet be permitted to establish it as an unquestionable truth, that their respective propensities and habits are highly injurious to each party.

(*v*) The author does no more than justice to such of his country-women as fell under his observation in the Island of Dominica, when he exonerates *their sex* entirely from this heavy charge; a charge, he must be allowed to remark, but too closely connected with the sufferings of West-Indian slaves in general; for, wherever it is notorious that men respect but little the laws of the *first table*, on what ground can it be reasonably hoped that they will regard with greater reverence the obligations of the second?

(*w*) The Author esteems it necessary to observe upon this passage, that he by no means wishes the Reader to consider what is here laid down as the relative proportion between the Europeans and the free people of colour residing in Roseau, as a correct statement; having had no official data by which to ascertain their respective numbers, it is probable that he may have erred extremely in his conjecture on that head.

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of their brutal and capricious passions? abolish the importation slave trade, and the number of these relentless tyrants will gradually be diminished: for in whatever proportion slaves become more difficult to obtain, and, consequently, are more highly estimated as a marketable commodity, in the same will their proprietors naturally be restrained, by prudential considerations, from acts of intemperate rage, and habits of systematick cruelty.

It is here generally remarked (and the documents enclosed confirm the justice of the observation) that people of colour are, of all proprietors of slaves, far the most rigorous and cruel; nor is it difficult to assign the reason of their being so. By persons of this description are to be understood all those who are not descended exclusively from whites. Now people of this class must either have been themselves originally slaves, or must be the offspring or descendants of freed mothers: they must also be, with very few exceptions, either native Africans, or Creoles; in either of which cases, it is scarcely possible for them not to have been long inured to the sight of unpitied human misery; the severe chastisement of the naked slave being a spectacle just as familiar to the eye of the West Indian, as to the English yeoman is that of the flogging of his horses, or of his dogs, and wont to excite just the same measure of compassion. But, ——, fixed as, I trust, my principles have long been, (and the oppression of the helpless is, I conceive, the crime which of all others I most abhor), of this I am assured, that were I, even now, compelled to witness daily the infliction of those private and publick punishments which occur continually around me, my heart would shortly either burst, or become obdurate: I leave it to you, ————, to draw the inference intended. It is, however, I cannot abstain from observing, utterly impossible for such men as my friend to reason adequately upon the present subject. The true-born Briton, the man who retains the glorious prejudices of his native land (that land where material cold far less constricts the human body, than ætherial fire expands the human soul,) is led at all times, by the instincts of his second nature, to consider the weakness of the poor as their most effectual protection against oppression; as the sacred armour given them by the Supreme for their defence, through which none but a monster of impiety would ever offer to inflict a wound. But in the minds of those to whom slavery has been long familiar, what different emotions does the contemplation of human helplessness excite!

To be a slave is, in reality, to become a being totally dependent on his owner for all that is pleasurable in life; and

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and this it chiefly is, I cannot but believe, which so much endears the infant to its parent, the creature to his God. But, ————, I must learn to feel and think far differently where I now am. To be a slave is *here*, in the general estimation of *free men*, to have forfeited all title to human sympathy and kindness, and to be degraded, with the faculties of a man, far, far below the condition of a brute.

No description of masters, however, are as much disposed to contemn, and consequently to maltreat their slaves, as those persons who have themselves experienced the want of freedom. Recognised as politically free, but with minds morally enslaved, authority, in the opinion of these people, is synonymous with despotism, and the proper exercise of a master's power is to make the feelings and actions of his slaves wholly subservient to the gratification of his capricious passions. How large a portion of this community are comprehended in the above-mentioned class, you will readily infer from the natural operation of the following legal maxim, which is universally established throughout these colonies; viz. *partus sequitur ventrem*. In consequence of this rule, almost all mulattoes (that is, all who are the offspring of black women by white men) must have been born in a state of slavery; for, comparatively speaking, very few such women are emancipated at all, whatever children they may have had, either by their masters, or other Europeans. (Having baptized a mulatto child to whom her father, a gentleman of the faculty, had bequeathed the whole of his personal property; part of that property, I subsequently learned with equal astonishment and indignation, was *the child's own mother*.) In reality, however, it makes but little difference either in the sentiments or the behaviour of these persons, whether they be free by birth, or by enfranchisement; the mode of education is to both the same; they both imbibe, from their infancy, a similar contempt of that degraded race to which (priding themselves on diversity of colour) they would fain disown all affinity whatever.

And now to come more directly to the point;—the truth of the premises no unprejudiced and disinterested person will, I am convinced, pretend to controvert; and allowing the evils above enumerated actually to exist, it appears to me impossible for any but the most unfeeling of human beings to refrain from wishing, that a speedy and efficacious remedy may be applied to them. For my own part, however, I know of nothing as likely to effect this purpose, as the abolition of the slave trade. Whilst slaves are suffered to be imported into these colonies as an article of traffick, it is,

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is, I conceive, impossible to regulate the sale of them by a partial prohibition, without exciting a ferment in the minds of the free people of colour, that may lead to the most dangerous consequences. But as long as this detested trade is permitted to be carried on, the most pitiable part of every cargo of slaves must unavoidably become the property of those very persons whose peculiar inhumanity of temper has been above asserted and accounted for. That this must actually be the case it is irrational to doubt, when it is recollected that in every Guineaman which arrives from Africa there are a number of weak, miserable, sickly objects, whom no substantial merchant, gentleman, or planter, ever thinks of purchasing. Now the first thing to which every free person, aiming at independence, *here* naturally directs his thoughts, is the possession of a slave; but the high price of healthy negroes effectually precludes people in mean circumstances from making such a purchase. Now a considerable portion of the free people of colour are in these circumstances, and consequently have no other means of procuring slaves than by buying the unhappy creatures recently alluded to, and who are here vulgarly denominated *refused negroes*. The number of these in different cargoes must, of course, be very variable; but that it is often lamentably great you will naturally conclude from what I am going to relate.

About two or three months since, I saw, more than once, a party of negroes just imported for sale; the party which I saw amounted to at least 100. I viewed them twice with a scrutinizing eye, as they passed in order by my side. Now, I have been for the last six years in the constant practice of visiting the dying sick; but the persons whom I have been accustomed to visit in that state have not, I conscientiously assure you, appeared to me, in general, as much emaciated as a large portion (at least one third) of the party to which I here allude. In answer to my inquiries relative to the cause of this melancholy spectacle, I have been uniformly told, that their skeleton-like appearance was not occasioned by any harsh treatment which they experienced on their passage, but by the captain having been unable to procure in Africa a sufficient quantity of wholesome and palatable food for them during their voyage; his provisions, it is commonly said, were deficient by one-half: the motive which prevented him from decreasing his cargo in the same proportion, it is certainly far more easy to conjecture, than it is to justify.

And now, ——, I should conclude this long epistle,

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did I not consider it as a kind of duty to subjoin the following caution: viz. that you are not to infer from the preceding account, that true philanthropy, or universal charity, is a principle unknown to the inhabitants of these regions. I am acquainted with several male and female proprietors of negroes who appear to me to treat their slaves, both young and old, with uniform kindness and attention; nay, I hesitate not to assert, that the condition of the *domestick* slave (if we abstract from it all ideal and contingent evils) seems to me, in a variety of instances, to be equally eligible with that of the most favoured menial servants in England. You must not, however, suffer these partial instances (for such only are they to be esteemed) to diminish your compassion toward this forlorn and oppressed race considered in the aggregate. We may ascribe to all English proprietors of Colonial estates, and to Englishmen in general residing here in the capacity of gentlemen, sentiments the most humane; yet still may the condition of West-Indian slaves, collectively considered, be wretched in the extreme; and that such is actually their case in the Island of Dominica, I am but too well convinced; I will proceed to explain the paradox. Of the English owners of large plantations in this Colony (and it is the same, I believe, throughout all our West-Indian Islands), but very few reside on their estates, most of them remain in England. Now, every non-resident proprietor of a plantation must, of course, commission some gentleman in the island to act as his attorney, to whom he delegates the power of superintending and controuling the whole œconomy of the estate. But the incomparably major part of attorneys are men of business; and it rarely happens that a person acting in that capacity has not the charge of more than one plantation; the necessary consequence of which is, these agents can obtain, in general, but very superficial information respecting the real feelings and ordinary treatment of the poor slaves; for they cannot often visit each estate, and seldom remain long on such as they occasionally visit. And hence it will follow, that the happiness or unhappiness of the negroes must depend principally (in these instances I may say entirely) on the disposition and principles of the manager, whose province it is to exercise immediate authority over every description of persons on the estate. And here, ———, it will be necessary for me to inform you what kind of a being a manager usually is: now a legitimate manager (one answering to the generical description of the animal) must have been sent out to the West Indies at an early age; at an age when the understanding

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understanding is seldom found sufficiently matured, to distinguish what is true from what is false, or the moral principle sufficiently confirmed, to postpone what is pleasing to what is right. Immediately on his arrival he must have been appointed to the office of an overseer on a plantation, and in that capacity constantly employed in superintending the labours of the negroes in the field or in the boiling house, and in otherwise expediting and enforcing the execution of the manager's injunctions. In this situation it is, in general, his destiny to continue for several years, having during that time little intercourse with any other Europeans than those of his own fraternity. Such must have been the mode of his initiation into the mysteries of Colonial agriculture, after which regular apprenticeship he succeeds, in consequence of the death of his own, or of some other manager, to the vacant office. Now, how far persons answering to this description are likely to exercise dominion with a lenient hand, is a question on which my friend is just as competent to decide *(a priori)* as myself; this, however, I must peremptorily add upon the subject,—that where the manager (the manager, I mean, of an estate on which there is no resident attorney or proprietor) possesses not an equable and humane temper, there exist at present no practicable means whatever of protecting the dependent slaves from treatment fatally injurious. For, only consider the case impartially; imagine, for example, that a slave has just cause of complaint against his manager; the attorney lives in a distant quarter; how then is the sufferer to make his grievance known to him? The slaves who are usually employed in passing and repassing from the estate to the dwelling of the superior agent are (as we must needs infer from the very nature of their employment) particularly favoured by the manager; the sufferer, therefore, cannot, with any prospect of successs, communicate his complaint through one of them. Conceive this difficulty, however, entirely surmounted, and that the attorney hears a true statement of the case, and is convinced of the negro's mal-treatment;—yet, even then, what steps can he take, however desirous of doing so, in order to redress the grievance? To dismiss a manager before another can be procured, is a measure, probably, replete with injury to the temporary interests of the proprietor; but whilst a cruel manager is allowed to retain his office, wretched, beyond the endurance of human nature, must be the condition of that slave who remains on the estate obnoxious, in a peculiar manner, to his personal resentment;

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resentment; there are a thousand secret ways in which he may be systematically persecuted (*x*). Nor is it solely in this instance that the propensities of a cruel mind may be here gratified with impunity: it is in the power of every overseer, and of every *driver* (hateful, but appropriate name) to act a tyrannic part as long as he is permitted to retain his office.

There is, however, one powerful temptation to oppressive conduct peculiar to managers. It is undoubtedly the interest, and consequently the wish of every person acting in a subordinate capacity, to ingratiate himself with his principal. Now, by no other means is a manager as likely to accomplish this object, as by increasing the annual revenue of the proprietor; but the produce of an estate, *cæteris paribus*, must always be proportionate to the quantum of laborious exertion. The designed inference is obvious; and how far it is justified by experience, you may collect from what I am now about to mention on the best authority.

On an estate in this island (called Picard) then belonging to a Gentleman non-resident, and provided with no more than 160 negroes, there died, but a short time before my arrival, in the course of *two years*, 90 *slaves*. Now, when you are informed that negroes are never liable in these climates to those epidemical diseases which are so fatal to Europeans, and, that the remainder of this very gang have enjoyed an uninterrupted state of health ever since they have become the property of another master (a merchant of

(*x*) The following anecdote (which was related to the Author by a Lady of the most amiable and respectable character *, who, together with her husband, died suddenly in the year 1799), will illustrate and confirm what is here asserted. Mr. W's manager on an estate situated at a considerable distance from Roseau, had planted some ground-provisions, for his own use, between the rows of cane; a circumstance of which Mr. W. so much disapproved, that he insisted on their being immediately rooted up. On his return, however, to the plantation some time afterwards, he found that his injunctions to the manager on this head had been totally disregarded; when he quitted the estate, therefore, the second time, he gave positive directions to the driver (an enslaved negro) to root them up himself. These directions the slave punctually obeyed, and, as the reward of his obedience, received from the manager 39 lashes, laid on with the greatest severity. Of the exact space of time which elapsed between the infliction of the punishment here mentioned, and the relation of this anecdote to the Author, I am ignorant; I remember only having been informed further by Mrs. W. upon the subject, that at the latter season *the manager still retained the trust which he had so shamefully abused*; and that both herself and Mr. W. regretted extremely the necessity which compelled them to continue him in his employment; a necessity occasioned solely (Mrs. W. affirmed) *by their inability to procure a more eligible successor.*

* A Mrs. Wilbraham.

Roseau),

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Roseau), and subject to a different manager, you will readily assign the real cause of this horrible mortality (*y*).

I do not mean to charge the generality of managers with the prosecution of a system equally inhuman. Though personally acquainted with but very few acting in that capacity, I know more than one who appear to me to possess a truly benevolent temper; all that I would be understood to say is this,—that there are circumstances attached to the situation of a manager, which naturally incite him to adopt a rigorous mode of conduct toward his slaves. The interests of every proprietor of an estate must, indeed, accord invariably with the wishes of the humane mind; but it is otherwise with the agent whom he employs; *his* interests often are (and far more frequently appear *likely* to be) most effectually promoted by means ultimately tending to the ruin of the plantation. And through what channel is the owner of Colonial property to obtain impartial information on the subject of his affairs? Every manager, it is reasonable to presume, possesses in some degree the confidence, either of his principal, or of the agent who transacts his business, probably of both; and, in either case, how easy is it for him by concealments, by palliatives, and by misrepresentations, to retain the favourable opinion of his employer, notwithstanding the most criminal and rigorous conduct toward the negroes.

It requires but little ingenuity to defend even the worst of causes, when there is no one to detect falsehood, to correct inaccuracy, or to obviate misconception. I need not say how exactly this remark applies to the case of those unfriended beings, who are here liable continually to suffer, but seldom permitted audibly to complain, never impartially to argue.

And now, ————, having said so much respecting the disease, you may naturally expect me to suggest something relative to the mode of curing it. It is, however, (unhappily for man) easy at all times to produce evil, but generally difficult and tedious, often utterly impossible, to correct it when produced. This remark, I *fear*, is but too applicable to the case before us; the malady of which I have been speaking is certainly too inveterate, and too severe, not to preclude all reasonable hope of a speedy cure. The immediate and total abolition of colonial slavery, I cannot but consider as a measure equally impracticable and ineligible, as one

(*y*) What is here observed with relation to the health of this gang of negroes in the Spring of 1799, continued to be equally applicable to them, though considerably augmented in number, when the Author quitted the West-Indies in April 1800.

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likely to prove, eventually, scarcely less detrimental to the interest of the slaves, than it would be, unquestionably, repugnant to the wishes of their owners. A regard to truth, indeed, compels me to acknowledge upon this head, that, for my own part, I am far more disposed to pay attention to the former consideration than to the latter; and that, on the same principle which leads me to espouse the cause of the oppressed, in preference to that of their oppressors. That property illegally acquired cannot at any subsequent period (during the life of the rightful owners)(z) be legally transmitted or retained, is a maxim which it is impossible for me not to admit, and which, therefore, it would be irrational in me not to apply. And if any man object to the admission of this principle, in the present instance, on the following ground, that the law of nations, and of our own country in particular, has, from time immemorial, sanctioned the purchasing of slaves, and the retention both of them, and their posterity in a state of bondage, I thus reply: such law can never operate, but by superseding the law of nature, or of God, and consequently ought to be esteemed *ab initio* invalid. On this point, however, it is premature and needless to insist; to an immediate and general emancipation of our colonial Negroes, I am altogether adverse; not because I consider such a measure as unlawful, but because I deem it inexpedient, likely to prove injurious to the interests of the slaves themselves. For I cannot but be of opinion, that, in every well-regulated community, no larger a share of civil freedom should be granted indiscriminately to its members, than such as the major part of them are not likely to abuse: fatally subversive of rational and genuine liberty must ever prove the exertions of those men, who aim at extending the political freedom of mankind, without paying any serious attention to the enlargement of the moral; who incite their fellow-creatures to demand their theoretick rights, without having previously instructed or disposed them to practise their unquestionable duties.

Here, however, I am aware of being likely to encounter with the following objection to the preceding doctrine. As no woman was ever yet truly chaste, who was restrained from vice by laws more cogent than those of her own imposing, so may it be justly said, that no society of men can ever reasonably be expected to merit the advantages and privileges annexed to the possession of civil liberty, till they be placed in a situation in which they have it in their power to abuse

(z) The words contained in the parenthesis do not occur in the original, and have been added by the Author, merely to obviate misconception of his real meaning.

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them. The two cases I acknowledge to be nearly parallel, and, therefore, I know not how more satisfactorily to reconcile the seeming contradiction, or to explain the doctrine which I hold on the present subject, than by comparing them together.

What plan, then, let me ask, would a judicious legislator adopt, in order to restore the degraded female character in Turkey, or in other correspondent regions? would he at once abolish all those restrictive forms and customs which have hitherto been considered, in the countries where they obtain, as the only effectual security of female honour? Certainly not: he would first strive to infuse into the minds of those, whose reformation he intended, the principles of virtue and religion; to rekindle in their breasts the long extinguished or dormant fire of conscious dignity. This point partially attained, restraint might be proportionably diminished; as the principles of virtue became confirmed, additional confidence might safely be reposed. As however, the material body, which might with ease have been retained erect on its native eminence, will frequently defy, if once allowed to fall into the abyss beneath, the united strength and ingenuity of man to raise it to its former elevation; so may it often fare with the human mind that has been long debased by non-congenial habits: thus also, probably, female virtue,

"cum semel excidit,
"*nolit* reponi."

On this account, therefore, we way reasonably presume that the attention of such a legislator would be directed chiefly to the rising generation, as to a race far more likely to realize his hopes, than the parents from whom they sprang. Now exactly the same plan, the same mode of treatment, ought to be adopted toward the West-Indian slaves; schools of moral and religious discipline should be instituted, and every judicious effort made for the purpose of awakening them to a proper sense of their real dignity, of the relation in which they stand, and the consequent duties which they owe to their Creator, and their fellow-creatures. At present the ennobling faculties and energies of human nature lie torpid in them, through inaction; the first thing, therefore, to be done, is to rouse them from this unnatural debasement, this fatal lethargy of the soul. And, for my own part, I entertain not the least doubt, but that, were judicious measures taken with this design, and prosecuted with becoming zeal, they would soon produce the happiest effects even on the most ignorant and immoral of this degraded race. There is something in truth and virtue congenially grateful to the mind of man, however depraved or sunk, something that involuntarily

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involuntarily conciliates affection, and exacts respect: were the gross film, therefore, which now obscures the mental vision of the poor Negro, but once removed; were he but taught to read the inestimable charter given by God, to all the human race, and sealed with the blood of Christ; were he but instructed to consider himself as partaking of one common nature, with the most exalted of human beings, as equally with them a candidate for eternal blessedness, and certain of attaining it before them, if only he perform more punctually the duties which he owes to God and Man; were this mental regimen, I say, systematically pursued, and accompanied with a judicious dispensation of rewards and punishments; the irrational, the malevolent, the impious hypothesis of the natural inferiority of Negroes, with regard either to the intellectual or the moral principle, would, I am convinced, be soon effectually refuted(*a*).

But by whom is such a system to be carried into execution? This, ————, I must own, is the grand question; "*Hic labor*," &c. &c. All hope of amendment in the principles and manners of West-Indian slaves, through the instrumentality of their resident superiors, appears to me to be Utopian and chimerical in the extreme: these persons (as far as I am competent to judge) are just as much disposed and qualified to attempt and to effect the wished-for change, as were the ministers of Beelzebub to co-operate with Christ in propagating the religion of the Gospel, and not one iota

(*a*) Experience being the most certain test of truth, the following practical illustration of what is here advanced will weigh, probably, with the generality of readers, far more than any abstract reasoning upon the subject. A friend of the author, who embarked for England, in the spring of 1800, from the Island of Dominica, where he had resided on his own estate, for little more than a twelve-month, effected during that short period so great a change in the dispositions and manners of his Negroes, that they had become, for several months, previous to his departure, remarkable for their honesty, their cheerfulness, and their general good conduct; whereas, antecedently to his abode with them, they were notorious for propensities and habits directly contrary. If it be asked by what means the gentleman alluded to was enabled to accomplish so striking a reformation, in so short a space of time; I answer, by pursuing the plan above prescribed, by instilling sedulously and regularly into the minds of his formerly abused and uninstructed slaves the principles of Christianity, and uniformly practising toward them the beneficent duties which Christianity injoins. By the natural operation of this paternal system, the necessity of corporal correction was happily precluded; so much so, that among a gang of 100 Negroes, one instance only of formal punishment occurred during the whole of their master's abode with them. It would be easy, I am persuaded, to effect the same wished-for change in the manners and dispositions of Negroes on every other plantation throughout the West-Indies, could we but induce their resident superiors to adopt the principles and conduct of Mr. Burnett.

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more. This language, ———, is not in the least too strong, when applied to the incomparably major part of masters, managers, and overseers of slaves, residing in the Island of Dominica; for if of these one, upon an average among twenty, can be found, who makes the least conscientious scruple of debauching, or permitting to be debauched, (often prematurely) as many of his young female slaves, as a depraved appetite renders objects of desire; you are at liberty to pronounce me totally destitute of information upon the subject; nay if any man, of common observation, and indisputable integrity, who has been personally conversant as long as I have been with the manners which here prevail, will controvert the justice of this assertion, I can almost venture to promise you forgiveness, even though you suspect me of writing an intentional untruth.

By what means, then, it may again be asked, is the evil here complained of to be remedied. The disease, I am entirely persuaded, will yield to nothing but an external application; the British Legislature must interfere, it must first abolish the importation slave-trade, and then extend its benevolent attention to the situation of those unhappy beings who have already been imported. The particular mode in which it will exercise its sovereign power in this case with most effect, and with least injury, it is not for me to pretend to specify. The following measure, however, I am decidedly of opinion, ought to be carried into execution immediately after the abolition of the slave-trade: Government should dispatch, without delay, commissioners of approved integrity, humanity, and prudence, for the purpose of ascertaining, beyond dispute, the real effects of slavery, and the domestick treatment and condition of the enslaved in every island. To this, benevolent masters can have no reasonable objection, and the interested sentiments of those who are differently tempered ought not to be regarded. Considered, indeed, as a preliminary step, such a measure will, probably, be reprobated by every proprietor of Negroes; and it will be reprobated, I doubt not, on the following ground. It will be alleged, that any compulsive interposition, on the part of the British Legislature, in a matter which has fallen hitherto under the exclusive cognizance of each Colonial government, will be a positive violation of public faith. To this argument, however, the following answer may be returned. If the British Parliament, when it renounced, as it is pretended, all right of controuling the internal government of these colonies, meant by that renunciation to disclaim all future power of protecting from manifest oppression the enslaved inhabitants, it did a thing to which (politically omnipotent,

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potent, as I am wont to deem it) I cannot but conceive it to have been utterly incompetent. I cannot believe it possible for any power on earth to supersede, or to suspend, for a single moment, by its decrees the laws of the Eternal; and among the laws of God, promulged to us by reason, I find not one of more certain, or of stronger obligation, than the following, viz. *that it is the immutable duty of those who govern to secure, and to promote, as far as they are able, the welfare of the governed;* which law is directly violated whenever the supreme or legislative power is induced to sacrifice the interests of the many to the wishes of the few. The question now before us may, I think, be brought to a very speedy issue: are the enslaved inhabitants of these colonies to be considered as subject to the British Government, or are they not? If they be not, what allegiance do they owe it? If they be, why, owing allegiance, are they not in return entitled to protection? Again, are our colonial slaves to be regarded merely as personal property, as beasts of burthen? or as human beings, as moral agents like ourselves? If we view them solely in the former light, why is the man, who deprives any of them wantonly of life, convicted (I should have written *liable* to be convicted) as a murderer? If in the latter, why are the rights attaching to humanity granted to them in this particular instance, but withholden from them in almost every other? To this, however, it will probably be replied; the Legislature of the country in which he lives (at the head of which is the representative of his British Majesty) is the only legitimate guardian and protector of the colonial slave.

"*Quære peregrinum*" ———

Would be my answer to reasoning like this; it will not pass on me: I might as well be told that the wolf is the proper guardian of the sheep; nay with just the same degree of plausibility; dogs, we know, are universally employed as their protectors; but dogs and wolves, an eminent naturalist assures us, are unquestionably ejusdem generis: now as the faculties of every animal (in the opinion of other celebrated sages) are far more perfect in a state of nature, than after having been regulated and restricted by the discipline of art, *ergo*, &c. &c. &c. I cannot refrain, ———, from treating with contemptuous and indignant ridicule an argument, that is calculated only to weaken the sensibility of the heart, by imposing on the judgment of the head. Let us consider the subject with an impartial mind. The members of every Colonial Legislature are to be numbered, generally speaking, among the principal proprietors of slaves. Now a proprietor of slaves (no one I conceive will venture to deny) may here

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exercise with impunity more arbitrary and severe dominion over his Negroes, than the most despotick prince on earth ever did, or ever could practically exercise over his subjects. But whilst the old Aphorism, πλειονες κακοι (*b*), continues to be applicable to mankind, it is impossible for a reflecting mind not to be assured, that as long as unlimited power is vested in individuals, so long will it be generally abused. This, indeed, we must acknowledge, that to exercise such power in a cruel and tyrannick manner, is alike injurious to the interests of the prince, and of the planter. But what shall we thence infer? Shall we on this ground esteem it reasonable to presume, that a wise and benevolent monarch will not fail to manifest his solicitude, for the future happiness of his subjects, by confining the regal power within just and proper bounds? Such perhaps might be the opinion of the super-lunar theorist; but, sure I am, very different will be that of the reflecting mind, which builds its notions and expectations of men's future conduct on the basis of practical experience. For my own part, nothing which I have hitherto either read or heard is sufficient to persuade me, that motives of pure philanthropy (unconnected, I mean, with any wish to prevent, to diminish, or to subvert the power of an opposing or suspected party,) ever yet induced an individual mortal to impose wise and equitable restrictions on his own (previously unlimited) authority. There is a selfish pleasure derived to the human mind, from the consciousness, and the ascription of uncontrouled dominion, which no other more generous gratification can induce it freely to forego. With respect either to strength of understanding, or complexional benignity of temper, few princes (and few subjects) I believe, are to be compared with Charles the First: but let us imagine twenty such monarchs assembled at this moment, for the sole purpose of framing a code of laws, the most favourable to the happiness of their respective subjects. Can we prevail on ourselves to believe that the major part, or, indeed, that any part of such assembly, will ever be persuaded, by the mere suggestions of benevolence and wisdom, to adopt a mode of policy restrictive of their own despotick powers? The supposition appears to me absurd. Happy, indeed, had it been for Charles and for his subjects, if he had holden the same political creed at the commencement of his reign, which the instructive (but unwelcome) lessons of experience taught him, I doubt not, sincerely to embrace before its premature conclusion. But I do not esteem it just to censure him on that account; to expect that men's opinions should ever be

(*b*) The majority are wicked.

uninfluenced

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uninfluenced by their wishes, or that prejudices flattering to their pride should be impartially scrutinized by their judgment, is of all things the most unreasonable, because of all things the least warranted by experience. How applicable these reflexions are to the case of our Colonial Legislators, I need not say; indeed, I needed not have argued at all *à priore* on the subject: to enable you to form an adequate judgment respecting the true spirit of West-Indian legislation, I have only to inform you (or rather probably to remind you) that in none of these colonies is the evidence of a slave admissible, either in his own defence, or in that of his fellow-slaves: should a free person, for example, be seen to murder a slave by an hundred other slaves, who have no motive whatever for criminating him unjustly, their concurrent testimony would be insufficient to bring him even to a trial for the offence(*c*).

To what I have already written on this interesting topick, I esteem it requisite to subjoin the following brief remarks, in order to obviate a popular objection against any material change in the civil and domestick condition of the colonial slave. It will, probably, by many, be contended, that such change will be ruinous to the colonies, and consequently highly injurious to the revenue of the mother country. Now, to this objection my first reply will be, I admit of no such consequence; for I am not more convinced of the superintendance of a God, than of the truth of this position; *viz.* that nothing which is morally good is ever likely ultimately to produce a preponderance of evil. Were I, however, to allow to this objection all the weight which it can possibly derive from the certainty of the consequence asserted, yet still should I most cordially contemn and execrate the man who, admitting the injustice and barbarity of the present system, will yet allege this argument as a sufficient reason for tolerating its continuance; even the treacherous murderers of Christ disdained or feared to accept the price of blood. ————, this land is blood-polluted. Thousands and thousands, do I sincerely believe, are in these colonies annually murdered, murdered by protracted, systematick torments, compared with which the punishments inflicted by a Phalaris,

(*c*) I submit it to the judgment of the reflecting reader, whether this civil incapacity, attached to the condition of the colonial slave, must not of necessity defeat entirely the operation of every penal law enacted in his favour; and whether all those humane codes, of which our West-Indian Legislators are wont so much to boast, are not with justice to be regarded as merely nugatory statutes, calculated solely to amuse the poor Negro and his friends with the appearance of that protection which is in reality withholden.

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are to be esteemed as mercies: after what I have personally witnessed (but far more after what I have learned from others) it is impossible for me to doubt the fact. If, happily, I err in forming this opinion, uncharitable as I must appear to others, I cannot on that account in the least reprove myself, for it is not in my power to think differently on the present subject, while I continue to exercise my reason. In entertaining, and much more in avowing these sentiments, I certainly shall not be accused, by any, of being swayed by a regard to private interest; and little do I know of my own heart, if I be at all more swayed by a principle of personal animosity(*d*). Yet so cordial, so unqualified a detestation do I feel of the system here established, that, were I conscious of harbouring a sentiment even of indifference with regard to colonial slavery, I should be also conscious of meriting to become a colonial slave. It was never the intention of the Deity, that one human being should be the despotick ruler of another; we must learn to bear a nearer resemblance to our Maker, in wisdom and in goodness, ere he will suffer us to exercise such a portion of his power; but the desire to become a domestick despot, no benevolent and expanded mind can, I think, ever feel: for, ————, this, in fine, is the result of my experience and my reflections on the present subject: I am thoroughly persuaded, that the possession of uncontrouled dominion, such as is that of the West-Indian master, tends alike, and in reality is only calculated, *to vitiate a good heart, and to gratify a bad one.*

Such, Reader, were the papers left with Mr. Wilberforce in November, 1799: that I now commit them to the press is to be ascribed, almost exclusively, to the same motive by which I profess myself to have been originally actuated. Respecting the fidelity of the several statements given in the preceding pages, on the testimony of the Author's personal experience and observation, no impartial mind, I trust, will be disposed to harbour a suspicion; and the facts therein related, being once admitted as authentick, the legitimacy of

(*d*) What is here said concerning a part of this Appendix I wish the Reader to apply to every sentence contained in it, which is at all connected with our colonial system in the West-Indies; to promote the interests of publick justice, and the cause of general benevolence, is (I must solemnly aver) the only object which I have had in view, whilst treating of that important subject. And if, in the beginning of this Appendix, there occur some passages which seem to have been dictated by a different spirit, the unfavourable impression which such passages might otherwise produce will, I trust, be totally effaced from the Reader's mind, when he recollects the occasion that gave birth to them, and how utterly impossible we often find it effectually to defend ourselves, without retaliating on those by whom we have been assaulted.

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the inferences deduced from them will not, I further flatter myself, be easily disproved.

Where, indeed, I have derived my information from a foreign source, and through channels indirect, it is morally impossible for me to rely with equal confidence on the accuracy of my representations: conscious, however, of having taken every requisite precaution in order to guard against deception, I entertain, I must confess, but little apprehension of incurring censure in consequence of any material deviation from the simple truth.

But, however invulnerable I may feel myself with regard to the *matter* of the preceding Papers, some apology, I doubt not, will be thought necessary, even by candid minds, for the severe and unqualified *manner* in which I have therein occasionally expressed myself. On this head, however, it might be with truth alleged in the Author's vindication, that, conceiving himself obliged to publish an almost literal copy of a manuscript addressed originally, with all the incautious freedom of epistolary correspondence, to an intimate friend, without any view whatever to publication, he cannot with equity be considered as responsible for every unguarded and intemperate expression to be met with in it. But, in reality, I feel myself neither required nor disposed to have recourse to any such method of defence. I wish the Reader to consider the objectionable passages alluded to merely as a faithful transcript of the Author's mind at the season when they were composed.

Scarcely less impatient of witnessing the injurious treatment of his helpless fellow-creatures, than he would have been of personal oppression, his feelings at the moment naturally transfused themselves into his language:——

"*Fecit indignatio*,"

he wrote exactly as he thought and felt; the literary offspring, therefore, whose harsh features now displease, might justly be suspected of a spurious origin, had its aspect less resembled that of the agitated and indignant parent. One thing, indeed, I must not refrain from observing further upon the subject; justice to others, as well as to himself, requires the Author in this place solemnly to declare, that, while composing the matter of the Papers here alluded to, it never once entered into his mind either to pourtray the character, or to animadvert upon the conduct of any individual whatever, those alone excepted who are expressly named, or directly and avowedly referred to.

A further objection, which I must not suffer to pass unnoticed, will be derived, it is highly probable, from the following

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lowing source; *viz.* from the alleged injustice of drawing general conclusions from particular facts; or (to express my meaning in more direct and explicit terms) from the manifest unfairness of taxing a community at large with criminal propensities and habits, merely on account of the delinquency of a few individuals belonging to it. Sensible, however, as I must needs be, that the force of this objection, wherever it really applies, is altogether irresistible, I shall content myself with observing briefly, in reply to it,—that, if the several criminating facts above recorded be not intimately connected with the general tenor of administrative justice in the Island of Dominica; if they tend not to shew, in a decisive manner, what is the characteristick temper, and what (by natural consequence) the ordinary mode of conduct which obtains among its free inhabitants toward the enslaved race; if, finally, there be a single charge contained in the foregoing minutes, of a nature strictly personal, levelled, I mean, against an individual, considered as literally such, as abstracted from society; nothing, doubtless, will remain for me to allege in defence of the Author's judgment, whatever I may be still allowed to urge in vindication of his intentions. With this remark, I shall conclude my comments on the contents of the preceding pages. Before I take my final leave, however, of the Reader, I must beg permission to submit to his consideration the following brief reflections on a subject, on which less has hitherto been said, than its interesting and important nature merits.

The abolition of the slave trade, in whatever point of view we consider its natural effects, must appear to the humane and disinterested mind (*e*) alike desirable. Such a measure is

(*e*) I would not have it inferred from what is here said, that, in the opinion of the Author, no temporary disadvantage is likely to result from an immediate abolition. It is, in the first place, highly probable, that the natural increase of slaves throughout our West-Indian colonies in general, will not be found, for several years, sufficient to compensate for the annual mortality; and it is, in the next, absolutely certain, that when the further importation of native Africans is prohibited, the cultivation of forest and waste lands will proceed in those parts far more slowly than it does at present. Considered, therefore, with a reference to its immediate influence on the revenue of this country, the abolition of the slave trade may be with reason deemed injurious. But in the judgment of expanded and truly patriotic minds, is attention to the financial interests of a state to supersede all moral considerations? Or is it reasonable to regard the rapid influx of wealth into a country as the only source and infallible criterion of national prosperity? The records of experience inculcate a very different lesson; they teach us, on the contrary, that whatever is of speedy growth is seldom of long duration, or of much intrinsic value; and that accumulated treasures can then only with reason be considered as the source of real and permanent felicity, either to nations or to individuals, when those treasures have

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is to be regarded in the first place, as an indispensable preliminary to any material and general improvement in the condition of the Creole, and the long-imported slave; experience incontestibly evincing, that neither the sufferings nor the untimely fate of Negroes (any more than those of other beasts of burthen) are at all likely ever to be regarded, by the generality of masters, with due commiseration and regret, whilst an opportunity continually presents itself of purchasing a fresh supply. But, when it is no longer possible for the colonial proprietor to obviate the natural effects of an inhuman system by means of this execrable commerce, a mode of conduct less fatally severe must, of necessity, be generally adopted toward the enslaved race, or

have been equitably acquired, and are likely to be innocently and laudably expended: but riches rapidly amassed can rarely have been gained by honest means, and are still less frequently made subservient to the accomplishment of worthy ends; they have rather a natural tendency to excite and aggravate those political diseases, to the influence of which we must needs ascribe the ruin of every powerful state of whose decline and fall History has recorded the particulars. England, Heaven be thanked! (in consequence of the happy union which has so long subsisted between the spirit of her religion and the nature of her municipal establishments), has attained to such a measure of vital strength, as precludes all serious apprehension of her being subjugated by the force of any external foe; the only formidable danger which apparently awaits her is from herself. And, whenever, Reader, she shall, like Saul, have completed her apostacy from the living God, by relying exclusively for aid upon the powers of darkness, it is but reasonable to expect that she will resemble him in her punishment as closely as she resembled him in her offence, I mean, will terminate her political existence in the same unnatural manner. For, what is it, let me be allowed to ask, which usually instigates minds, not insane, to the horrid act of suicide, except the sense of misery, and the consciousness of guilt? And what so frequently leads to both as an irreligious temper, and immoral habits? With regard, however, to the means by which such temper and such habits are chiefly propagated, no reflecting mind can entertain a doubt; they are propagated chiefly by fortunes rapidly and iniquitously acquired, and lavishly and criminally spent. But, whatever pain, whatever danger is justly to be apprehended from a change of system, it is yet unquestionably true, with regard to the body politick as well as to the body natural; that whenever it has become alarmingly bloated and diseased through voluptuous excess, there is no other method of preventing an untimely dissolution, than by recurring to a more pure and temperate regimen. Whoever reflects dispassionately upon these things, and adverts at the same time to the striking difference which has already taken place in the circumstances, the manners, and the sentiments of Englishmen through the influence of our extended commerce with the Eastern and the Western Indies, will scarcely be disposed to deprecate the loss above suggested, as an evil of considerable magnitude; or to controvert the truth of Solomon's brief decision of the matter, *viz.* "Better is a *little* with righteousness, than *great revenues* without right." Prov. chap. xvi. v. 8.

cruelty

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cruelty and avarice will soon want subjects on which to exert their injurious influence.

Much, however, as the welfare of West-Indian slaves of all descriptions must be acknowledged to depend on the speedy abolition of this traffick, there is a certain class of them whose sufferings call for that event far more loudly than those of any other. Yielding to the influence of that assimilating principle by which the temper of men's minds and bodies is wont to be so happily adapted to the peculiar circumstances in which Divine Providence has been pleased to place them, the Creole slave (like the bird that has never been permitted to quit his cage) submits, comparatively, with ease to those restraints, and to that unnatural treatment from which he has never been exempted; and the same, nearly, may be said of all other negroes to whom a state of colonial slavery has been long familiar. But far different are the feelings of the recently imported African; the victim originally either of violence or of treachery; severed for ever from his country, from his friends, and from every other object by which existence is wont to be endeared; and brought in chains to a land of strangers, whose superiority he must needs envy, but is not allowed to emulate; there soon to be publickly exhibited as a beast for sale, and afterwards consigned for life to serve without affection, and to drudge without reward; it is not in the power of human fancy to exaggerate his wretchedness. Of such, however, is the cargo of every Guineaman almost exclusively composed, and of such not fewer than 60,000 are annually purchased by British colonists. How far, indeed, the minds of those, who can endure to erect the superstructure of their fortunes on such a basis, can reasonably be expected to abound with sympathetic and benevolent affections, I leave it to others to determine. This, however, I do not hesitate to assert as an indisputable fact, that the unhappy beings whose forlorn condition I have recently attempted to describe, are, of all other slaves, the most unlikely to meet with that commiseration and indulgence from their masters, to which they are so peculiarly entitled. What I shall proceed to remark upon the subject will be found, I trust, sufficient fully to establish the truth of this assertion.

The far greater part of imported Africans (it is almost superfluous to observe) are originally purchased for the sole purpose of being employed in the field. Now, there are but two descriptions of persons by whom they can be bought with that design, *viz.* the owners of plantations that are already in a state of cultivation, and the proprietors of lands which

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which have not been as yet subdued by labour. Adverting to the case of those planters who are comprised in the former class, it must needs occur to me to remark, that, whenever a cargo of slaves arrives in any West-Indian port, the demand for negroes on the several estates adjacent will naturally be proportionate to the mortality which has recently prevailed among their respective gangs. But it is with men as with all other animated beings; the degree in which they multiply or decline is regulated wholly by the proportion which obtains between their enjoyments and their wants, their comforts and their sufferings. The greater, therefore, *cæteris paribus*, be the demand for negroes on any particular plantation, the more oppressive must we needs esteem the system which there prevails.

When, indeed, the proprietor's demand for negroes is to be traced to a different source, when it is occasioned solely by his having undertaken to cultivate waste, or forest lands, a similar inference does not, at first view, appear admissible. If, however, we recall to mind the laborious nature of the work which newly-imported negroes, purchased with this design, are destined to perform, and combine with it the dejection and tardiness of mind which naturally result from their former habits and their present circumstances; if, I say, we do this, and allow ourselves further to reflect on the length of time which must elapse, before a newly-cultivated tract of country can be made sufficiently productive of nutritious food to maintain a gang of slaves, without depending chiefly on the merchant for the means of their daily sustenance (*f*); we shall not, it is probable, be disposed to think more favourably of their condition in the latter situation than in the former. And yet, in the preceding enumeration of the evils with which these friendless beings are fated to encounter, I have omitted the mention of a danger far more formidable to them than any other; the danger, I mean, that they have to apprehend from the ordinary temper of their owners. It is inconsistent with the natural course of things, and the known complexion of the human mind, to entertain a hope, that a due attention to the temporal interests of others will ever co-exist with an immoderate attachment to our own; wherever, therefore, avidity of gain is the leading principle of action, the most powerful

(*f*) So enormous is the expence incurred by maintaining negroes in this manner, that I only quote the language of a most intelligent and experienced Dominica planter, when I express it as my entire persuasion that few instances can be mentioned in which a gang of slaves *so sustained*, have not materially suffered through deficiency of food.

checks

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checks are indispensably required in order to counteract its cruel and injurious influence; but avidity of gain, combined with a sanguine hope of rapid accumulation, is, confessedly, the predominating motive by which adventurers of the class alluded to are generally impelled to speculate in colonial property; whilst the wretched individuals, on whose daily labours they rely exclusively for the completion of their intemperate wishes, have no other security whatever against habitual oppression, than what they may happily derive from the benevolence, or from the policy, of their respective masters. Unfortunately, however, for them, the immoderate desire of wealth is naturally productive both of inhumanity, and of improvidence.

It inclines men to the latter by prompting them incessantly to grasp at present savings, and at early profits, though at the expence of distant and gradual acquisitions incomparably more important; whilst it disposes to the former through the influence of a principle still more constant in its effects, though not, perhaps, equally manifest to notice. In order to explain the operation of the principle here referred to, I shall take occasion in the first place to remark, that till we have penetrated into men's latent thoughts, till we have attentively observed the emotions of their hearts, and made ourselves acquainted with all their wants, their wishes, and their fears; in a word, till we have transfused the feelings of *their* bosoms into our *own*, it is morally impossible that we should adopt toward them, while in a state of suffering dependence, that humane and equitable mode of conduct which Christianity enjoins.

But is such likely to be the employment of minds ardently engaged in the pursuit of riches? Such to be the study of the man who can consent to feed his fortunes by means of a systematic traffick in the flesh and blood of his fellow-creatures? After having perused the official documents about to be submitted to his consideration, the Reader will be fully competent to decide upon the question (*g*).

(*g*) In forming a just judgment with relation to the treatment which usually awaits the native African in the West Indies, the Reader will be, perhaps, assisted in some measure by the perusal of the two following anecdotes:

During my residence in Dominica I was induced to visit (in company with some other gentlemen) a Guineaman, which had just arrived with a cargo of negroes; and, when we were about to quit the ship, the Captain desired his female slaves to entertain us with one of their native dances, a desire with which they instantly complied. My attention, however, had not been long engaged by this painful yet interesting spectacle *, before it

* When the scriptural Reader is informed that these dances are always accompanied with the voice, he can scarcely fail of being reminded of a pathetic Psalm, written, without doubt, by an indignant Israelite, in circumstances very similar to those of this more compliant choir.

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What immediately follows is extracted from an anonymous Pamphlet, published in the year 1789, by a zealous advocate for the continuance of the slave-trade, and entituled—*No Abolition.*

This work (the production, evidently, of a mind equally able and well-informed) takes a comprehensive view of our Colonial system in the West-Indies, as far as that system is connected with the continuation of the slave trade; I shall insert, however, in the present publication, such extracts only from it as refer to the sale and mortality of negroes in the Island of Dominica.

Quoted from Page the 21st of the Pamphlet above mentioned.

N°. 6.——Dominica.

In the years		*Slaves.*
1763 }	There were in	5,872
1766 }	that Colony	8,497

(From pages the 21st, 2d.)

Years.			*Slaves imported into Dominica.*
1767	—	—	2,085
1768	—	—	2,323
1769	—	—	3,123
1770	—	—	2,584
1771	—	—	3,179
1772	—	—	3,895
1773	—	—	2,005
			19,194

was diverted by the following exclamation uttered involuntarily by one of my companions (a gentleman, I must not omit adding, who has resided, I have reason to believe, almost constantly from his birth on a large plantation), *poor devils, they will shortly dance to a very different tune.* I envy not, Reader, either the feelings or the understanding of that man on whose mind these words shall fail of making a deep impression. That the pitiable beings alluded to by this gentleman are equally alive to the sense of injury with those more favoured mortals whom Divine Providence mercifully exempts from similar sufferings and trials, the frequency of suicide among them, soon after their arrival in our Colonies, sufficiently attests.

I was once present (on an occasion not calculated to give pleasure to the humane mind), when I heard this truth acknowledged by a discreet and lenient manager in the following terms——*No new negro* (he remarked) *ought to be flogged for the first two years.* The inference, however, which reason compelled me to deduce from this remark, was by no means of a consolatory nature; for what could I rationally collect from it but this? The change from an humane to an oppressive mode of conduct toward the native African must be slowly and methodically effected; the spirit of the generous animal must be gradually broken by fatigue, and humiliating usage, before he can be made duly patient of the whip. So cruel, Reader, are even the tender mercies of the wicked. In

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In 1773, Lieutenant-Governor Stuart remarked that 6000 Negroes were annually necessary.

(From pages the 23d, 4th, 5th.)

		Slaves.
Observations ——	Dominica had in 1766 —	8,497
	Imported in 7 years, above	19,194
		27,691
	In 1773, alive there —	18,753
	In the efforts to settle, lost in 7 years, in an advancing state of clearing woods.	8,938

Hence it appears 1277 were lost per annum; that number imported would have kept up the stock of 8497, without extending the settlement; and with that stock, an importation of 2742 per annum, added to the natural increase, enlarged the stock in 7 years to 18,753, from 8,497.

Import and Export of Negroes, from accounts furnished by the Inspector General.

Years.	*Imported Negroes.*	*Exported.*
1784 —	5,200 — —	13
1785 —	6,254 — —	117
1786 —	8,407 — —	189
1787 —	5,709 — —	2,018
Total in 4 years	25,570 — —	2,337
	2,337	
In 4 years	23,233 remain in Dominica.	

Which is 5,810 per annum (and per Governor Orde, it is 2,784 per ditto) added, yet the number diminishes; for, by the same report, Dominica had

In the Years	*Negroes.*
1773 — —	18,753
1788 — —	14,967
Diminished	3,786 in that time.

By

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By Governor Orde's return.

Years.	*Negroes Imported.*		*Exported.*
1784	— 4,998	—	— 1,925
1785	— 6,254	—	— 3,328
1786	— 8,407	—	— 5,927
1787	— 5,709	—	— 2,852
Total	25,368	—	— 14,032
	14,032		
In 4 years	11,336 remain in Dominica.		

Not knowing which of these Reports deserves the preference with regard to accuracy, I esteem it the fairest method of proceeding to add the two sums together, and take the mean number (viz. 17,284), for the true one; whence it will appear, that during the period above specified, 4,331 Negroes must have been imported and retained annually; notwithstanding which large supply, the aggregate number of slaves surviving in Dominica in the year 1788 amounted, we find, to no more than 14,967: so that, in fact, the proprietors of estates in that Colony must have lost, upon an average, during each of the four years referred to, *more than one-fourth part of their respective gangs* (*h*).

I shall

(*h*) "The Island of Dominica," (according to the Author of *No Abolition*, page 29) "contains 186,436 acres, of which, the Commissioners "appointed by his Majesty disposed of upwards of 100,000, and Governor "Orde a considerable quantity, on terms of sale and cultivation, to clear "and cultivate at the rate of five acres of every hundred acres every year, "till one-half of the whole cultivable land is cleared, under a penalty of "5l. sterling for every acre deficient. To enable them (the purchasers) to "perform the conditions of the sale, one negro for each acre would be in-"sufficient, therefore upwards of 90,000 are wanted for that purpose, "beside a considerable annual supply to keep up the present number." How much of this Colony has been cultivated since the year 1788, it is not in my power to inform the Reader; nearly two-thirds of it, however, I have reason to believe, remain at present in a state of nature. Now, those parts of the Island, it is to be observed, which are too mountainous for the cultivation of the sugar-cane, are most happily adapted for the growth of coffee; and its situation in time of peace is peculiarly favourable to commerce. Whenever, therefore, that wished-for event shall take place*, and the greater part of our recent conquests in the West-Indies be relinquished, the extensive tracts of rich and unbroken soil which are to be met with in the interior of the colony will, doubtless, tempt the avidity of numerous speculators equally ardent in the pursuit of riches, and equally indifferent with relation to the means by which riches are amassed, with the adventurers above described. Leaving it to the Reader to draw the obvious conclusion, I appeal to his conscientious judgment, whether, under the influence of the opinion here suggested, and of the reasons above as-

* Vide Note (*a*), page 1.

signed,

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I shall not pretend to comment on the preceding extracts; they speak a language too plain to be interpreted, too strong to be enforced. I shall proceed, therefore, to observe, finally, upon the subject, that fully as, I trust, the baneful influence of this unnatural traffick has been already proved, it yet remains for me to specify the ground on which its speedy abolition is chiefly to be desired. On this head, however, I know not how to express my sentiments with more effect, than by relating the following anecdote.

There are now living, in the Island of Dominica, two emancipated Moorish sisters (each of them well known to the Author); respecting the occasion of whose captivity, I learned the following particulars from the person with whom they have constantly resided ever since their arrival in the West-Indies, and who was the original purchaser of one of them. They were brought over, my informant told me, from Africa a great many years since, when they were mere children, and at that time were accustomed to relate the particulars of their seizure, &c. &c. in terms similar to those which follow.

They were living, they were wont to say, in a state of freedom and imaginary safety with their mother, when, one morning, during her absence from home, they were suddenly alarmed by the shrieks of their only brother, a child younger than themselves; ignorant of the cause, and unsuspicious of any personal danger, sisterly affection naturally hurried them to the spot from which the cries proceeded; thither, however, they had scarcely come, when they were seized by the same insidious party who were carrying off their little brother. What became of that brother afterwards his sisters could never learn; but, respecting their mother (the only surviving parent whom they appear to have had) they collected from an unhappy countryman, who had experienced the same disastrous fate, the following melancholy particulars. As soon as she became acquainted, on her return to her bereaved dwelling, with the full extent of her calamity (*viz.* that she had now no children left), her mind sunk beneath the weight of her affliction; and, unable any longer to endure the sight of objects which reminded her continually of her irreparable loss, she wandered away despondent from her native place, and was never after heard of.

signed, it were not utterly impossible for the Author of this Pamphlet to refrain from inculcating, occasionally, at Dominica, the doctine which he did inculcate on Good-Friday and Easter-day 1800, without the most criminal neglect and dereliction of his ministerial duty?

Such,

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Such, Reader, were the effects derived immediately from the operation of this traffick in one particular instance. What then are we to think of the combined distress occasioned by it to all the relatives of the 60,000 miserable victims who are annually exported from Africa by British agents?

That the Guinea merchant, and the Guinea factor, are far more powerfully influenced by the *auri sacra fames* (the impious lust of riches), than by the feelings of Christian charity, or the sense of moral obligation, and that no commodities are wont to be as cheaply purchased, as those which have been surreptitiously obtained, are truths which the judicious mind will with equal readiness acknowledge and apply.

The limits prescribed to this Appendix not allowing me minutely to describe the various other evils (both physical and moral) which naturally flow from the same fatal source, I shall content myself with observing generally upon the subject, that, as long as the slave trade is permitted, it will not only, by necessary consequence, exclude entirely from an immense tract of country the blessed light of revealed religion, but will continue, infallibly, to propagate among the wretched natives a spirit totally repugnant to the benignant genius of the Gospel; a spirit, I mean, of enmity, treachery, and outrage; no other can it possibly generate, it being essential to the successful establishment of this detested system, that it break through every tie, and eradicate every affection by which mankind are wont to be either politically connected, or socially endeared (*i*). Such, Reader,

(*i*) One of the most common and plausible arguments made use of by the advocates of the slave-trade, is wont to be derived from the barbarous and unnatural practices and customs which are said to prevail in those countries where it is established. Parents and other relatives, it is asserted, are accustomed in those parts to treat and to dispose of their dependent families and kindred in the most arbitrary manner; and the authority exercised by princes over their subjects is represented as being equally despotick; whilst prisoners of war, and criminals judicially condemned, would, it is further stated, invariably suffer death, had it not been for the *humane* interposition of the European agent. In answer, however, to all that can possibly be advanced upon this head, I esteem it sufficient to observe, that it is but a very irrational method of vindicating an obnoxious system, merely to alledge in its defence, that it tends in some degree to mitigate the evils which it has produced: and yet to nothing more does the preceding argument in reality amount; for it is the resistless temptation holden out by the Guinea factor, which chiefly incites the petty powers of Africa to wage perpetual and insidious war against each other; and it is the same temptation, and that only, which prompts the African prince to betray his subjects, and the African father to sacrifice his offspring. And shall we admit it as an apology for the conductors of this traffick, that it has thus succeeded in cancelling the bond of nature, and frustrating the design of civil government? Or shall we acquit them of inhumanity and injustice, merely because, after having incited to the burning of the negro's hut, they are pleased to snatch his helpless family scorched and writhing from the flames?

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is the tendency of the slave-trade; yet is this unnatural and execrable commerce,—this commerce, the streams of which are chiefly fed by the blood of parents, and the tears of orphans, still tolerated, still sanctioned by the British Legislature; and that, in direct opposition, not only to the dictates of humanity and justice, but to its own recorded judgment. What is this, however, in reality, but to acknowledge the supremacy of Jehovah with the lip, yet still persist in bowing the knee to Mammon? But, can we possibly imagine that the eye of a jealous God will for ever wink at such flagrant idolatry as this? No——

Raro antecedentem scelestum
Deseruit pœna pede claudo.

i. e. "The people which impiously persists in violating "the rights of other nations, divine justice rarely suffers "long to retain its own." Of this important truth, humbled and dependent Spain affords at present a striking illustration; and, that the crimes of England (crimes similar in nature, and of equal magnitude) (*k*), still remain unexpiated by any signal and appropriate judgment, will, doubtless, be ascribed by pious minds solely to that beneficent forbearance which waits for and solicits her repentance. And may repentance, practical repentance, seasonably intervene between her offence and its chastisement; if not——

Ἕσσεται ἦμαρ ——— (*l*).

nor dare the Author, as a Christian, deprecate the event; which, as a man, he wishes not, even for a moment, to survive.

(*k*) The following quotation, from a Writer, equally to be admired for genius, piety, and patriotism, will illustrate the Author's meaning in this passage ——

Thanks, gentle swain, for all my woes,
And thanks for this propitious close,
And cure of ev'ry ill.
More cruelty could none express;
And I, if you had shewn me less,
Had been your pris'ner still.

The concluding stanza of Cowper's Elegy on a Goldfinch starved to death in a cage.

(*l*) Iliad, Book VI. line 448.

FINIS.

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